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**WHAT IS A
MAN**

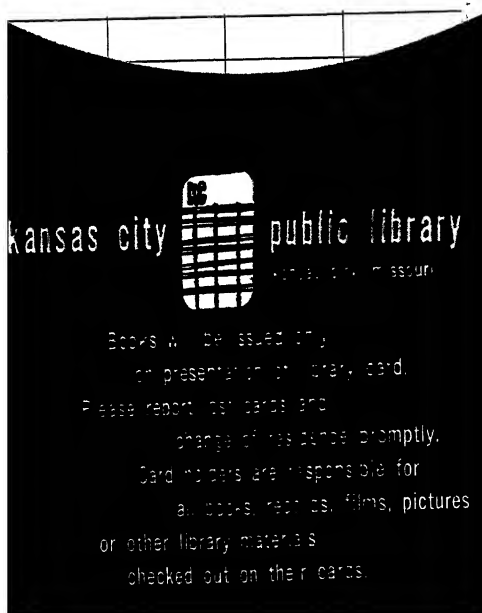
ROBERT RUSSELL WICKS

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JUN 1964

OTHER BOOKS BY
ROBERT RUSSELL WICKS

ONE GENERATION AND ANOTHER
THE REASON FOR LIVING

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

WHAT IS A MAN

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

SHAKESPEARE,

Hamlet, Act IV, Scene 4

WHAT IS A MAN

A DESIGN FOR LIVING
THAT MAKES SENSE

BY

Robert Russell Wicks

DEAN OF THE CHAPEL,
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK
1947

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A

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TO MY
SONS AND DAUGHTERS
AND
MY WIFE

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PROLOGUE

Everyone feels, at the core of his being, that life should make sense. There are some who try to like a senseless life, because, when nothing makes any difference, it makes no difference what is done. The end is boredom that is suicidal. There are always others, however, who have the deep "common sense," when events become a meaningless tangle, to make the most out of a bad time. They do not justify a senseless situation, as though it were the good plan of an inscrutable providence, but try to "*make it into sense.*" This requires conviction of the sort that can outlive frustration.

We are all caught today in a civilization which contradicts itself. Two soldiers returning from World War II symbolize the common bafflement of our age. One said: "The world is the same old grab-bag of selfishness. Our ideals never work out." He thought of an ideal as a condition where selfishness would reach an end; but he found the world like a running race where the referees ran ahead with the finish line whenever the contestants approached. The other soldier confessed: "The trouble with me is, I don't know what I am doing, or what I am for." He was perplexed to find that we must start writing the novel of our life before we know how it will all turn out; just as Sir Walter Scott would write nearly half a book before he knew its ending.

The essence of this bewilderment lies in the fact that the recent course of events has run counter to our best individual intentions. For thirty years we have been engaged

in preparing for and recovering from two world wars which none of us wanted. Our commercial and scientific interests have combined to overwhelm our ethical and religious principles. Impersonal corporations and organized mass pressures have relegated private conscience to a minor role. The overall behaviour of modern men has reached a level of ingenious deviltry and wholesale devastation unequalled by barbarians or beasts; and yet the level of individual intelligence and good will has never been so high.

All over the world people are groping for some faith by which to live amid this tragic nonsense.

From the most ancient times men have handled frustration by some conviction that could make meaning out of contradiction. They have had their "views of life." They liked their "views" old and tested by long experience. They liked "common" views, that were held by multitudes over long stretches of time, as a check on passing fads of the moment. Unconsciously they used the centuries to correct the emotional judgments of the present hour.

The common conviction which made our western civilization is latent in all of us. But it is so vague and inarticulate for the majority that it has ceased to be compelling. Young people would agree with an Englishman who wrote: "That kind of conviction is unfamiliar which drives you to do something spectacular or *which keeps you alive and alert in depressing circumstances.*"

But we have a formula of our faith once for all delivered to us. It has some thirty centuries of testing behind it. That is more than any scientific view can claim for itself. It is a formula as familiar as our nursery rhymes. It is agreed

upon and regularly used by Catholics and Protestants of every stripe. It is rooted deep in the Jewish heritage. Marginal religious people and followers of almost any religion of worth could repeat it without offence. It is general enough to contain, in solution, the profoundest insights of our religious tradition. It leaves room for different groups to contend, fiercely if need be, over a variety of interpretations. It is so concise and so simple that a child can learn it. It is the most universal formula for understanding human nature that is known to our bewildered race. It is inexhaustible and timeless. It is the Lord's Prayer. This book deals not so much with the prayer itself as with the meaning of life behind this ageless formula.

Part I

OUR AWARENESS OF
MYSTERY

1. THE GIFT OF FAITH

The primary obligation of every man is to recognize that he is a creature who can never equal or comprehend his Creator. This is the essence of the first clause of the Lord's prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

From primitive times the distance between earth and sky has symbolized the immeasurable difference between man and his maker. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts, saith the Lord." The whole is always greater than a part. It is natural to say: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" It would be absurd to say: "When I consider my heavens the work of my fingers . . . what is God that I should be mindful of him?" We must reserve our final respect for the Creator, who was here ahead of us. Job, in the ancient story, struggling with senseless frustration, heard a voice out of the whirlwind, saying: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" It is plain common sense that the Creator, the ordainer of the constitution of things, always knows

more than we do about his creation and what sense can be made of it.

Why are we timid about deep convictions?

Many of us have become timid about using any words as personal as "Creator" and "Father." They do not sound scientific. Religion uses the word Creator to indicate that while men may vote for a national constitution, no human beings ever voted for the constitution of the universe. Responsibility for this vast going concern lies with the power far above our own.

Leave the word for it temporarily a blank, if you will. Or use the Old Testament word "The Most High." Say with the Psalmist, "It is too high, I cannot attain unto it,"—which removes the responsibility far enough from human reach so that no one will ever try to identify man with his maker. One thing is sure: neither the beginning nor the end of anything is in our hands.

The final word about the truth and the sense of life is with the author of this creation and not with any human creature whatsoever.

Can we make ourselves believe?

It should be a great relief to our modern minds to know that we cannot make our own religious belief; for there is widespread impatience with anyone invent-

ing a religion to suit himself. No one dreams of inventing his own science.

Our training has tempted us to think that we *first* must reason out what to believe and *then* believe our reason. We say we cannot induce ourselves to believe the unbelievable, which is of course true. But the fact is that something first strikes us as believable and then reason tries to understand what has struck us.

Once there was a man who went down cellar in the dark to fix his furnace, and by accident stepped on the upturned toe of a long iron poker which rose up and dealt him a terrific blow on his head. He did not create a belief in the poker. The poker attended to that; and then he called on his reason to *understand* what had hit him.

Should a rational man accept his faith blindly?

Belief begins where our eyes are opened to something which makes a bid for our attention. What man, in his right mind, ever reasons out the conviction that he should marry a girl? He is first confronted by a girl worth marrying, and then, if he is still in his right mind, he uses his brains to test his impressions and persuade the girl to marry a man like him. So every scientist is encountered by some natural fact that is believable enough to arouse his curiosity and set his reason to work. We would not progress at all if we were

not met by the believable before we could understand it. An old ship carpenter once said to his boss, concerning a difficult job on a leaky boat: "I know that trouble can be fixed." "How do you know?" said the boss. The carpenter replied: "Don't ask so many questions. I can't understand all I know."

Where does faith come from?

Religion has always insisted that faith is a gift. We neither make it up nor blindly accept it. Obviously there is more being done with creation and with our lives than we can understand. That is so believable that it arouses our interest and invites us to give all our minds to it—and perhaps all our strength, all our will, all our soul. If we had to figure out in advance how there could be an all-sufficient creator, with good intentions and a personal interest in each of his creatures, we would never complete the evidence for and against it.

2. THE GIFT OF WONDER

Does knowledge abolish the mystery of creation?

The philosopher Kant confessed that he stood in speechless awe before the double wonder of creation and compunction. The mystery was both outside and inside.

One thing that has always made itself believable is the *sheer wonder of creation*. It has been said that science is clearing up the mysteries that are due to ignorance, but religion stands for the mystery that is never cleared up—the mystery back of all mysteries.

The Old Testament story of creation is not scientific, but when it reports God as saying, "Let there be light . . . and there was light," it refers to a prescientific decree that fixed the whole scheme of things. We believe in the wonder of creation simply because it strikes us as unfathomable, final, decisive, and arouses the sense of wonder in us.

No one makes his own sense of wonder. This is given to him. It is the ancient root of all religion; and it is the source of all discovery, inquiry, and aspiration. Great poetry, music, and art spring out of the depths of wonder. Whenever wonder declines, life stagnates or dies. Einstein has said that when a scientist loses his sense of wonder, his learning days are over. As the heavens are always higher than the earth, so the wonder of creation is always over our heads, to keep us knowing that we never know it all.

Can we explain the compunction we feel within us?

The mere wonder of creation is too vague to furnish what we cherish as personal religion. The personal quality is derived not from outside, but from inside where the force of compunction wrestles with our pri-

vate desires. It is as much a part of our make-up as the color of our eyes.

No one understands why our natural desires should be bothered by compunction. Many explanations have been offered to simplify the mystery, but the inexplicable was there first to start the explanations. They were afterthoughts. Thomas á Kempis said, "I would rather feel a compunction than know the definition thereof." And everybody who remembers Lidice or Lublin or the horrors of Nazi prison camps can see the result of training a generation to ignore compunction altogether.

The Bible's earliest picture of compunction in action is in that prehistoric tale of Jacob wrestling in the dark with an angelic adversary who would not tell his name. This is primitive oriental imagery, but it is a true picture of the way we encounter our creator before we can name him.

Here, where compunction conflicts with natural desire—calling not for discussion, but for decision—we meet the living God working from within.

This is the ancient root of personal relations with a personal God—of which we will have more to say later. Human character at its best is marked by this inner encounter with goodness that is independent of all human codes and which makes all human goodness seem incomplete and presumptuous.

When student atheists speak of getting rid of God they are disposing of an *idea* which argument has de-

stroyed. But how often these honest atheists, when they are honest, show themselves mastered by the strongest compunction against injustice, untruth, sham and respectable stuffiness! Like Thomas á Kempis they would rather "feel a compunction than know the definition thereof."

3. THE GIFT OF GROWTH

Besides these impressions from creation outside of us and from the wrestling inside each of us, there is the mystery of growth, making itself believable where our lives are *joined together with others*.

Why is growth always something more than we can manage?

The growth of our personality cannot be imposed on us from outside, even by omnipotence, for our consent is always involved. Yet it does not occur inside an isolated individual. Growth happens *between us and others where we meet*.

This very old fact has emerged in our over-individualized world like a revolutionary idea, which is as radical and upsetting as the discovery that the world was round.

The idea is simply stated in a famous sentence of Dostoievsky: "We were born on purpose to be to-

gether." We were born in a family relation of at least three. Our life unfolds its possibilities in relations, not in isolation. Where we meet, there we are subjected to correction and recovery. There we receive our revelations of what there is to know and to become. Real growth is incurably reciprocal.

This fact that "all life is a meeting" is nothing new. The radical discovery that the world is round was nothing new. The earth had been round for a long time before the fact became plain enough to revolutionize navigation. All discovery is no more than a fresh grasp of what was always true but overlooked.

What is wrong with the idea of a self-made individual?

In our western world we have all been living a great lie, like the lie that the world was flat. The long battle to establish freedom for individuals obscured the basic truth that no man is self-made, self-sufficient, and self-determining. We are each of us rooted and grounded in relations. John Donne wrote: "No man is an island, but part of the main." Totalitarian dictators saw that the machine age has produced a new situation where the relatedness of men becomes so inescapable that something collective has to be done about it. To be sure they have capitalized on this discovery and made a racket of it. But no action of individuals, however free, can stop the revolution which they lead. The

lie of individualism cannot stand against the relatedness of human life.

On the other hand a collective way of life may become another lie. Organization may be worshipped as a false God until the result is the conversion of society into an impersonal chain-gang, ruled by gangster cunning and the ethics of conspiracy.

Our business is not to condemn the revolution but to learn to live in it and realize afresh that our Creator requires a community in which to create us.

Why does "idealism" fail to effect the improvement we hope for?

It is essential for well-meaning people generally to recognize that development occurs in some concrete meeting with others who confront us with a contrast or contradiction or challenge. We settle no important matters in some ivory tower where nothing disturbing happens to anyone. It is a vain thought that we can stay in seclusion and formulate a neat plan which others, who live in the thick of things, will put into effect for us.

The best-laid plans of men, which so often go astray, must be made and remade and made over again in actual conflict of wills and opinions. Milton said, "The best way to get at the merits of a case is not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial, but to get it argued with reckless bias for and against." New pos-

sibilities are discovered when events precipitate a crisis to which we must respond by a decision that commits us to action.

After such decisive action, the consequences are taken out of our hands and transformed into a new crisis which demands another response. Our times and their consequence are in God's hands not ours. This repetition of challenge and answer, of crisis and new creation, is the sphere of real life as contrasted with the "ideal life" which none of us live except in thought.

Rabelais tells of a poor French peasant who had been reduced to a single crust of bread and one small coin. As he passed a certain rotisserie, he sat down to eat his crust in the appetizing smell of a roast cooking before the fire. Thereupon the canny proprietor said a charge would be made for the odor which so improved the taste of the bread. The equally canny peasant, throwing his last coin upon the pavement until it rang, replied that he would pay for the smell of the meat with the sound of the coin. Idealism segregated from real conflict is like paying for a smell with a sound.

Why is freedom necessary for mystery of growth?

In talking with young people, I find that another mind must consent freely before there is any useful communication of ideas. This core of freedom shows itself in discussion by a perpendicular wrinkle just between the eyebrows. The faintest flicker of that scowl-

ing line is a sure sign that communications have been cut. Right there is the challenging claim of another mind to be understood. Only as I stop trying to force ideas and yield to that claim for understanding, can I expect recognition of my own claim for a hearing. When the recognition is mutual, we get together in a shared meaning where we are both free. We affect each other merely by seeking to comprehend each other, not by trying to improve each other. When I see things from his point of view and he sees something of my outlook, we grow in grace and wisdom without either surrendering his sense of originality and independence.

This claim to be understood confronts us in every human being. We meet it everywhere, and when we reject it something is lost in the lives that fail to meet. That loss, when multiplied in many instances, affects many people, disrupts links in society, and prevents mutual exchange until fatal divisions occur. This demand to be known and appreciated is universal and inescapable. Private happiness, personal effectiveness, and all the affairs of the world focus at this center.

How is our growth related to the personal love of God?

The love of God is not something in an imaginary Father's heart up in the sky. It is active in this living demand upon our sympathy in concrete situations. In

Christ's parable of the Judgment, the rejected are the righteous people who have failed to recognize, in persons all around them, this universal call to enter another life at the point of its real need, whatever that may be.

Our religion was given to us in the drama of one man's life who entered into the lives of those who were misunderstood, and shared their meaning while they shared his. We cannot produce this religion by argument for it is a personal response to a divine demand reaching us through every one who needs to be appreciated. Naturally, therefore, we have difficulty believing in a personal God while discussing him merely as an object, or while exploring the mysteries of the physical universe.

4. THE GIFT OF REVELATION

Can any information come to us from God's end?

Far more illuminating than all that has been given us generally from outside, inside, and in between is the revelation which has reached us through a chain of lives in a particular historical community. The literature of the Bible is the expression and the record of this company as it emerges in human history. And all who have been influenced since by this literature and its faith, are parts of the living chain by which the

truth has come through to us, which is condensed and crystallised in the Lord's Prayer. But revelation is not a short cut to knowledge which reason could have found. It brings a truth that reason could not discover about God until God made it known from his end.

One must remember in reading the Bible that it is all held together by the view that God the creator *participates* in his creation and in human history. The best revelations of him therefore come through lives in which he participates. The Bible is not a series of arguments. Its method is entirely different from that of a "discussion group." It presents a series of characters, in whom good and evil are mixed in the familiar human fashion. All of them are obviously wrestling with compunction, feeling their unworthiness, and, at their best, giving themselves over to be servants of a purpose of justice and love, too great and good to be fully known.

What kind of truth should one look for in the Bible?

The Bible is not a scientific book, since it appeared before science was dreamed of. It is not a philosophical book with an explanation of the universe—its writers knew far less about the universe than we do. It is not a book of political and economic strategy to be outgrown with changing conditions. It is not even a book. It is the whole literature of an ancient people—myths, legends, histories, biographies, letters, memorable

speeches, poetry, drama, with collections of proverbs, hymns, and prayers—all put together and edited at the end of a nation's existence. The material in these writings represents some fifteen hundred years of human experience.

The book as it stands is best read as one would read any other ancient literature, though its significance is religious rather than literary. Its myths and legends and all the more formal writings reflect the stages by which truth dawned on men as they contended with the old, old predicament of human nature. For *human nature is the field of the Bible*. It is concerned with the eternal question, "What is a man?"

The problems of human nature are the same now as in the past. And the insights given to the Hebrews as they responded to things that happened to them have been tried out through the long stretches of history down to our own day. Thus has been gathered a body of knowledge into which is packed the results of living experiments under all conditions and through the worst catastrophes.

Out of persistent mistakes and disagreements have emerged recurring agreements, which have proved so profound, so universal, timeless, and true to life, that we describe them as a revelation, transcending all generations and races, and belonging to the ages. We work with this gathered truth to explore the range of its meaning in changing conditions age after age.

What view of life is given in the Bible?

The faith of the Bible is a view of life which can be quite simply stated in outline. Life is an eternal triangle; you in your relations, I in my relations, and God at work through and beyond all our relations. We think of the sun and the earth and some planet as though they were entirely separate, simply because there is distance between them. But we know that the sun exists in an endless number of such triangles, and there is no way to draw a line between the various forces of attraction.

So our personal world is a field of personal force, where we are affected by others and others by us, and all of us by an unpredictable factor. Nowhere can we say that any event occurs by human agency alone or by divine agency alone.

We are not in this triangle at one time and out of it at another. We live and move and have our being in it, when we remember and when we forget, whether we believe it or not. The ancient symbol of God up above us in heaven has been a way of asserting that God's activity is more than the sum of human feelings and achievements.

What is the answer to frustration in biblical faith?

The biblical answer to human frustration is this view that a superhuman power intervenes in the net-

work of our human relations, to correct, to reclaim, to transform, and reveal possibilities "that have not entered into the mind of man to conceive."

What we have derived from the Bible cannot be separated from the other sources of faith which we described as outside, inside, and in between us. The various sources color and illuminate and sustain each other. They all coincide in the supreme obligation of man: to yield his self-will to the infinitely greater will of his Creator. Such an act of worship is the supreme attainment for any human being. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

This practice of acknowledging God's supremacy, hallowing his name, is something far more constant and inclusive than attending a church or saying one's prayers.

A modern philosopher has insisted that God is forever incomprehensible and yet we can understand nothing without him.

Part II

OUR TWO FUTURES

1. THE AMBIGUOUS OUTLOOK

Everybody is wondering today how we can trust the future. We have been paying a tragic price of millions of men and billions of dollars for a man-made future clouded in doubt. Everyone, in one way or another is trying to make his own future. The prayer, "Thy Kingdom come", suggests a future different from anything we can make.

Can we suspect the future and trust it at the same time?

The answer to this searching question lies in the fact that human nature is always involved in two futures, two goals. We are designed to live two lives at once.

One future pertains to the fulfillment of our natural desires. We will come to this when discussing the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." The other is concerned with the fulfillment of personality.

The two can be illustrated most simply by what happens when grown people are made out of children. My little grandchild, at the humble age of two years, simply cannot stand the frustration of his desires. Take away a stolen cookie from him, and he sets his feet apart, utters a piercing scream, turns purple, loses his breath and finally folds up on the floor. When he cannot have what he wants, life is not worth living.

How different that is from a man like Titus Oates who accompanied Scott on his fatal expedition to the South Pole. On the return journey his feet were frozen so that he slowed the progress of the whole party. Knowing that he was endangering the lives of his friends, he crawled out of the tent one night in a driving blizzard and never came back. In his diary they found these words written: "The spirit of man is stronger than anything that can happen to him." Here was personality finding a goal on a higher level altogether than self-preservation and the satisfaction of desire. When life "comes" to us on that level, where the mere living of it is a profound satisfaction, the Kingdom of God has arrived within us. A Navy man wrote from the combat area: "There come times when you either fold up or grow up."

What is the object of existence?

Without this second future in the reckoning, our natural life of desire is ever proving itself a frustrated thing. It is enough to know that our natural life can be continuously transformed so that we become dead to it and are resurrected on a higher level where the "spirit of man" proves invincible, with power to share itself in a community which has no final limits.

The fact that we have such a future coming to us is expressed in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come." The object of our existence is

not another world after death, though it includes what that suggests; not simply a better future in this world, though it should include that; but finally and above all this *new life* where we die to self and become alive in that world of free spirits where our true and final citizenship belongs. Without this prospect, life cannot finally be made into sense.

This "new life" is always the same for all men. It is the same now and in the future, here and hereafter, "on earth as it is in heaven." To know this life is to know the Eternal.

2. OUR FIRST NATURE

We are all born self-centered, so that any interference with natural desires seems like tragedy. Such is our first stage.

Self-interest is always the core of this nature with which we come into the world, and natural desire is its driving force. We use our natural reason as a means of control when desires threaten to get out of hand, and as a far-seeing guide when we must choose between what is good now and what is good in the long run.

There is nothing wrong with what is natural. Nevertheless, if we try to act as though anything is right for us if it is natural, we become entangled in a net of our own making, partly because our own desires conflict

and partly because our wishes interfere with the wishes of other people.

Why should we doubt that the future can ever satisfy our natural desires?

It is a curious and easily overlooked truth that satisfying our natural desires cannot finally satisfy. Religion, as many remember it, has never had much confidence in what it calls the "natural man." It has perhaps overstated this suspicion, but it is nearer the truth at this point than our modern optimism about the self-sufficiency of man. We are neither completely natural nor completely spiritual—we are always a mixture.

We cannot satisfy ourselves by satisfying desires, because every satisfied desire suggests something more to want. To gratify a child by buying him whatever he wants, is to pour water into a sieve. Desires are limitless.

Tolstoy once wrote a story of a farmer who always wanted a little more land. He finally went to the frontier where the peasants of a remote race offered him all the land he could walk around in a day; but he had to be back at the starting point at sunset. He was tempted to take in so much territory that, as he finished the long run, he fell dead at his goal. Then six feet of earth was all he needed.

It is also a paradox that when we are self-satisfied,

we are dissatisfied, because then we satisfy no one else, which is unsatisfactory all around. If we try to escape from an unsatisfied self by doing things simply to forget ourselves, our motives are still self-centered and we remain wrapt up in self "like a porcupine rolled up the wrong way, tormenting himself with his prickles." This is why everyone has a craving for some future beyond self-preservation and self-satisfaction.

Furthermore, there are deep reasons why we cannot make a paradise on earth where human desires can be fulfilled.

Can we make a heaven on earth free from want?

In our machine age we have vastly extended and multiplied our relations with people in order to obtain what we want. This extension has been so effective as to become a peril. Men have leaped to the conclusion that if we were totally regimented (instead of everybody for himself) in the business of getting what we want, we would create a paradise.

The future paradise never arrives, for quite ancient reasons. One reason is set forth in that old story of the Garden of Eden. The deceptive temptation there was a suggestion to the first social group that paradise would be complete if only they could have one more apple. They had a totalitarian monopoly of all the sources and means of production, and yet the old struggle of good

and evil began in that illusion that all would be well when one more desire was satisfied. This is the nemesis of all Utopias. No ingenious arrangement can stop people wanting another apple. Hitler wanted only a little more living room for his people, and he continued to ask for more room until he tried to own the earth.

A poll was once taken to gauge the contentment enjoyed at different levels of income. At each level people felt they could be quite satisfied if they had one-third more than they then possessed. On that score, satisfying desire would only lift a man into the next higher bracket where one-third more would bring the paradise. Even in the Garden of Eden when the first family had everything it wanted, the two sons started the first murder story because one had more than the other to contribute to the community chest.

Another reason for the loss of an earthly paradise becomes clear today when we stress the *common good* to be reached by social effort. The efficiency of organization easily becomes an ideal and an end in itself; and before we know it we are trying to shape people to fit the organization. The laborer must conform to the pattern of the union; the individual must be suited to a social system; the citizen must be straight-jacketed to make an efficient state. Instead of organization being made for man, man finds himself made for organiza-

tion—until he becomes *the victim of his own society*. The word "Utopia" literally means "nowhere."

If this "natural man" with his self-centered desires is the whole of life, the future of the race is very black indeed. Fortunately no one's life is so exclusively selfish. The logical mind may isolate the "natural man" and call him totally depraved; but in life the eternal spark of good is a quickening factor in every human being.

Can intelligent self-interest alone be a safe guide to security and peace?

Here is a familiar description of the logical future of pure self-interest: Our natural ego is made up of insatiable desires for expansion, which cause conflict but which cannot be stifled without stopping life. Law is invented to control this conflict. Thus legally protected, our natural life is a struggle to expand at the expense of others for self-glorification. Even without law we might stop short of killing others because we need them to glorify us and serve us. Final expansion of the ego is found in expansion of the state to which one belongs, which has a mission to expand and gain dominion over others. Since the interests of the ego must be right because they are natural, no state will recognize anything but its own interest as right. States tend to destroy rivals, though other peo-

ple should be kept alive as useful manpower. Thus we must have continuous war or widen our community until we are in a combination so strong that it cannot be challenged, but can be restrained by another combination just strong enough to defend itself.

This description of power politics was taken from a thesis written by a graduate from one of our leading universities. If it sounds rather terrifying, it is well to remember that our religion saw this truth about man long, long ago. It argued that the "natural man," unchanged, will inevitably act this way, using all his intelligence; and the more intelligent he becomes, the more dangerous he can be. Assuming that men had no more than selfish natures, Hobbes argued in his "*Leviathan*" that only a government with absolute power could hold them in order.

Should suspicion of human beings make us pessimistic over human nature?

Anyone who trusts that the "natural man," thinking only of self-preservation, armed with limited intelligence, and equipped with science, can bring us into a haven of gratified desire is in for disillusionment. Selfish desires of our first nature can play havoc with intelligence, no matter how it is educated; and science, after all, is only an instrument of power, for good or evil according to who has the power.

The contest of local, partial interests and passionate prejudices of limited people generates the social energy that moves the life of the world—like some engine of monstrous power. To be certain that this engine will be operating in any foreseeable future is not to be hopeless. We would be hopeless if we were blind to its constant presence. We are all tempted to think that the past was somewhat of a failure and that the present is a day of preparation for a future escape from the difficulties of this same old human nature.

Look at our generation in the midst of the bloodiest century in all history. We are the future which people thirty years ago were hoping for. We could scarcely say that we were the fulfillment of their longing.

Is it enough to live for a distant future in this world?

Push the future of this self-preservation motive a little further into the future and what have we? A scientist recently wrote at the end of his book: "In the course of ages man will learn, by trial and error, if not by intelligence and reason. We are today only children in the morning of time and before us lie countless centuries of man's vast future." True, and thank God for the limitless possibilities that man will discover. But human selfishness can spoil the greatest possibility and turn it into a possibility of evil. It is a bit hard for the

ordinary man to live for a future that will not come for a million years, and then be corruptible. And if we let the future wait, then we are tempted to wait for change to happen. We leave well enough alone if it takes too long to change it.

Young people today are not easily taken in by roseate pictures of the future. They have a healthy suspicion of man-made heavens on earth. When this suspicion is strong, we seek the things for which we can live and die that do not fail. We finally learn that we handle the uncertain future best when, all along, we have some higher interest than the deceptive desires of the natural man, however glorified.

The final plea of the war premier of Japan asked the entire population to be ready to commit suicide for an earthly state divinely ordained to rule the world. If they had all died, there would have been nothing left of the state for which they had died. When the worldly dominion of the Nazis crashed into ruins, some of its leaders were left with nothingness and took their own lives. We have had a horrible warning against seeking a future paradise of earthly desire as the chief end of man.

Why try to improve our earthly conditions?

It is certainly not enough to make things easier with a little more money and a few more gadgets all around.

Man does not live by bread and modern improvements alone. But we must attack every physical condition of misery and injustice that keeps human souls sunk in mere subsistence, while others lose their souls in a surfeit of this world's goods. We must deny the idea that any sort of work is enough for a man if it gives him a living, whether it develops personality or not. Once we lose track of man's soul, we lose the object of life and sell out everything we care for most to secure what we care for least. Christ once described a prosperous man who pulled down his barns to build greater in order to say to his soul: "Soul thou hast much goods, laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But some inner voice whispered: "Thou fool."

Such is the predicament of our first nature, without the second. We need the things of this world to keep us alive. They are necessities driving everyone of us to go into business, professions, homemaking or writing books. Dr. Johnson used to argue that no one ever wrote a book save out of necessity—it was much easier to talk. But these necessities are also the source of our worst anxieties, our cruelest sins, and are helpless to ease our deepest sorrows. At the final crisis they are worthless, for "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

3. OUR SECOND NATURE

This despair over our first nature is good for us only as it serves to emphasize that our first nature is not the best part of us. It is only the raw material out of which our second nature is made, as water is transformed into steam power which can run machinery and heat our homes. It is nothing against water that, unconverted, it cannot yield these blessings.

How can we live hopefully when everything in the world comes to an end?

As we labor for the things which fail, we come to appreciate values that never fail. This was the burden of a familiar passage in *Pilgrim's Progress*:

"Then I saw in my Dream that . . . they presently saw a Town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the Town there is a Fair kept, called Vanity Fair; it is kept all the year long. . . . The fair is no new erected business, but a thing of ancient standing . . . wherein should be sold all sorts of Vanity . . . as Houses, Lands, Trades, Places, Honours, Preferments, Titles, Countries, Kingdoms, Pleasures and Delights of all sorts. And moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen Jugglings, Cheats, Games, Plays,

Fools, Apes, Knaves, and Rogues, and that of all sorts. Now—the way to the Celestial City lies just through this Town where this lusty Fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this Town, *must needs go out of the World.*”

Can ordinary men be content to live for the “here-after”?

The vanity of this world is mistakenly interpreted to mean that everything money can buy is useless and that our real life comes hereafter in heaven. John Bunyan may have felt that way in prison. But if all worldly goods are good for nothing, one wonders why the Creator ever bothered to make room in creation for the vain struggle. It feels like a real struggle when we try to make a living for our family, or run a business in competition or live through a period of wide unemployment. Making the good things of this world more available to more people is certainly a major concern for our whole world right now.

But the wisdom of the *Pilgrim's Progress* outlives all misunderstandings. The trouble with the wares in Vanity Fair was not that they were worthless, but that *they all came to an end*. Vanity is something that vanishes like a million dollars in a depression, leaving not a wrack behind. The truth is that everything in the world keeps coming to an end, no matter how necessary

or good it is. Childhood, youth, age, fashions, schools of thought, social orders, tyrannies, and civilizations—all come to an end. Our natural life comes to an end. There is no way to hide this fact. There is no way to make a heaven on earth out of things that come to an end. Bunyan was simply reaffirming the ancient religious fact that *the things which come to an end are not the end for which we were created.*

We have an instinctive feeling that a man who is worth no more than his money is not worth much. Life spent in the pursuit of things that fail is somehow the caricature of life. It is like the vacuous, good-for-little, fox-hunting gentleman described as "the unbelievable in pursuit of the inedible." How different from the explorer Titus Oates with a spirit "stronger than anything that can happen to him!" When Christ gave his whole self for the love of God for all men, he revealed the true end of our natural life in a new nature, given in deathless loyalty to the spirit of the Creator, bearing witness to the love that never faileth. There is an end to our natural life beyond the natural.

Being forced to let go some necessities of this world seems to be the only way we appreciate what abides after we have let the things go. The eternal wisdom of Christianity appears in its refusal to promise some worldly Utopia where all desires can be fulfilled and everybody be satisfied—like the beast who lives but "to sleep and feed."

It is easy to misrepresent the healthy suspicion of high religion for pleasure and success in this world. But it must not be overlooked that comfort and pleasure, however innocent, can be two of the chief obstacles to human development. A father, who had been obliged to work hard for his own living, told the Dean of a certain college that he wished to save his son from such hardship and intended to give him all the money he wanted. The Dean suggested he send the boy elsewhere, the college already had enough students on that road to perdition.

It is a true insight that the very innocence of comfort and pleasure slows down the adventurous spirit. The main hindrance to the duty of voting in a crucial election is a comfortable chair at home. Certainly it is not wickedness that holds back the thoughtful, self-forgetful deeds that would make our life mean more to all around us. The hindrance is generally some innocent self-indulgence, easily justified. Mr. Walter Lippmann says that, up to the First World War, it was our "effortless security" that kept Americans from understanding the growing menace of mass unemployment, and delayed our taking any foreign policy as a serious duty. The normalcy of our easy security was a fatal blind spot.

4. CAPACITIES OF OUR SECOND NATURE

Is life fulfilled without love?

Capacity for love and friendship is the essence of our second nature. No one fully sees how his nature lives by love until he is deprived of it. Take this letter from a man, separated from wife and family, who had been on a munition ship in the Pacific, and save for one brief month ashore, had scarcely left his tiny floating world for a year: "I have almost forgotten what it is to be happy and to have old friends to talk with and a family to play with and call my own. Such complete and freezing stasis of all sympathetic human contact is a terrible ordeal. My heart is so parched and famished for companionship that every pulse, day and night, is a stab of physical anguish.

"I swear to you, a man has but to live such a loveless year to believe and know, with his whole soul, that love is the Father, love is the Son, and love is the Holy Spirit; and that without love there is nothing, nothing, nothing at all—save possible outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"When the desolation begins to creep into my very marrow, and I feel the blackness of despair closing in on me, I lie back in my bunk and read three short pas-

sages from the Bible, over and over again, until my spirit revives and my heart stops aching so fiercely. One is the twenty-third Psalm; then 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest'; and lastly, 'Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

"I don't know whether it is the words themselves, or the infinite compassion and gentleness that reach out from them—all I know is that they are like a cool hand laid on my forehead and a quiet voice close to my ear.

"I have tried every book I knew, and everyone on the ship, and found none that could offer such comfort."

If Christianity has made a religion out of love it has spoken a truth which we know best when our nature tries to exist in that sort of loveless loneliness, tasted by so many men long away from home. Restoring the soul by remembrance of compassion and the infinite care of the Creator, and taking thought of one another in their isolation, were men's chief protection against losing their minds.

Much that has gone by the name of love is sentimental nonsense, less effective than perfume in such a selfish world as ours. But counterfeits of love are like the exception that proves the rule. We were born to be creators and love is that outgoing quality of life which enables us to escape from ourselves and enter into other personalities.

In other words we are creators by nature, and our life is fulfilled, not by being acquisitive but by being creative. That is why a child can have more honest and prolonged fun creating amazing things from a junk pile than from the toys that are acquired with his father's money.

What is so unique about the creative capacity of our higher nature?

The Bible's insight into this creativeness for which we were designed is expressed in the assertion that we were made "in the image of God." We are bound to the natural by our bodies, but we can rise to a higher level whence we look back at ourselves, laugh at ourselves, judge ourselves, feel ashamed of ourselves, and outreach ourselves. That is the way a creator stands apart from life and links the present with all that is unrealized.

How we live these two lives at once is an eternal mystery, but we do it. I recently saw a student walking through the college campus reading a letter. By his smile I knew he was really living on the campus of a woman's college far away. So do we put ourselves in other people's places, look out on the world from their point of view, and sometimes, from that angle, obtain a startling view of ourselves. With a smattering of psychology we may even stand off and analyze ourselves into a stream of impulses and reactions—which raises

the nice question of how a mere stream can stand on its own banks and watch itself go by.

This mysterious capacity to be in two places at once is the secret of our dignity and value as persons. We can withdraw from the present, survey the past, and grasp something of the future, holding in mind a great span of time as though it were one moment, like a small sample of eternity. We can detach ourselves from the customary and live ahead of our time, perceiving what others do not realize and making it available. This individual capacity of appreciation by which each person can be aware of something unrealized and make it available to others, gives each individual his value to the Creator. Furthermore, we can rise above limitations and mistakes and the pressure of circumstance into freedom of conscience—the supreme mark of the free man responsible only to God. All true freedom stems from this unconditional relation of a man's will to the Highest—call it truth, love, God, or what you will.

How "otherworldly" can we be?

We never in this world can become perfectly detached spirits, because we are obliged to make our living among natural necessities. Some do leave the world behind and make it their one mission to magnify a thousandfold the dedicated life of the spirit which we so easily forget in the struggle to survive. A traveller in the far north met a priest who lived among the

Eskimos, in a cave, without any modern conveniences, and in temperatures that ranged to fifty degrees below zero. "He was a perfectly simple soul," wrote the traveller, "wholly given to living for God's love of every human creature. Cold to him was a mere word. He was somewhere living another life. Once again I was taught that the spirit was immune and invincible—there was something more than grub and shelter in this conqueror of the Arctic."

Most of us cannot leave the world behind. We come gradually to a sense of the spiritual or "otherworldly" life by a kind of common sense religion, which begins with what is good for us, and develops through a mixture of motives to an uncommon sense of what we are good for.

At first our motives were quite unmixed. As infants, when we were hungry in the night, we had no altruistic consideration whatever for the family. But through our connections with people, our self-interest became entangled with other people's interests. We felt their claim as though it summoned us to be part of something greater than ourselves. From small meanings to larger meanings we were led on to forget ourselves, until, at times, we were satisfied to be swallowed up in purposes that were of value to everybody.

First it was like doing one thing after another. Then our faithfulness was seen to be part of all faithfulness at work in the world; our suffering part of all the

suffering by which good has been recovered from evil. We realized our connection, not only with each other, but with an unbroken continuity of purpose active in all events. In that endless connection we found our true life.

Many modern people have lost sight of this simple clue once expressed by our fathers in the words: "the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." For God's purpose is partly embodied in all that is accomplished, and partly waiting to awaken us to what is yet in store. There is no time when it is appropriate to halt. We are children of the eternal and the infinite. We are connected parts of a community of the spirit that transcends all boundaries of time and space.

Why are we so restless and unhappy when shut up in ourselves?

Our bodies, necessary as they are for developing souls, have a way of concealing us from each other and from our real selves also. The man inside is hard to know from outside. Certain signals like a scowl, a smile, a blush, a worried look, or blazing eye tell us something and warn us to look out for what is coming. But most of the time "the individual 'you' and 'I' remain sealed up within, crouching behind the eyes looking poignantly into a world of other eyes, behind which others crouch to look out." Deep in everyone of us is

the longing to be released from self-imprisonment. We discover ourselves only in friendship when we allow each other freedom to pass in and out, to browse in each other's pastures, and enjoy each other's views. No one ever fully escapes from self, but the nearest we come to that blessed state is in self-giving love which goes out to live in another life for the other's sake, regardless of self. Then a bit of the Kingdom of God has come.

5. DEATH AND RESURRECTION

A miracle happens to our nature when through death to self we rise to a new order of life. It is like a rebirth. Christ said that whenever our possessive interests become central, it is harder to enter into this kingdom than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. He boldly affirmed that "it is hid from the wise and prudent"—for it is not visible to a self-centered eye.

What does resurrection mean in terms of our experience?

Paul took the resurrection of Christ as representative of what should happen to everyone *daily*, as well as at the end of life. He said: "I die daily." When death came to the capital I, a new life of far, far more

significance and beauty came alive in him. After his ego was "crucified, dead, and buried," he could affirm: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." Evidently the result was never perfect, but he counted everything but loss that he might "know the power" of that resurrection in his own personality.

He knew when "self" was given up by the way it hurt. To this man, death to self could not be a painless affair.

All that stands between us and eternal life is this capital I. Our life needs more than a natural *change* in behaviour; we need an *exchange* of self for another life that is not ours but God's life in us. This great exchange is entirely different from growing stronger, taller, richer, nicer, more educated and more secure—good as all these may be. It is different from developing a weak will into a will as strong as the Nazis ideal. It is a new creation within us.

Christianity has its unique way of representing this whole transaction. The first perfect instance occurred with the historic appearance of the only true son of God, in whom the eternal life of God took on our nature and demonstrated how it could be transformed into a higher life of eternal quality. In him was the eternal drama of love suffering for our human shortcomings that we might be induced to give up self and allow that life of love to come alive in us—*before we deserve it.*

We are still killing, with our sins, the thing he started. But whenever it seems dead and buried, it arises again in people to continue the deathless struggle of all good against all evil. Men can no more kill it than they can prevent the coming of spring by cutting the trees and mowing the grass. How strange but true that we must be shown the love of God dying for our selfishness before we are persuaded to let self die! William Blake wrote in one of his last poems, "Jerusalem":

"Jesus said: 'Wouldst thou love one who never died
For thee, or ever die for one who had not died for thee?
And if God dieth not for man and giveth not himself
Eternally for man, man could not exist.' "

And he adds a note as to the way the "self" may die daily:

"Every kindness to another is a little death
In the divine image."

Why must we lose "self" in order to find our true life?

This ego of ours is a loveless thing and deadly. Yet it is a favorite of ours. We protect it, conceal it, excuse it, justify it as though our life depended upon it. Our defence mechanisms are legion.

Self is the very opposite of the love which Paul described in the great thirteenth chapter of his letter to the Corinthians. Our ego suffereth no one to bother it and is unkind; it envieth those it should emulate, is puffed up and behaveth itself unseemly; it seeketh first and last its own and so is easily provoked and thinketh evil of all who cross its wishes; it rejoiceth in its own indulgence, and rejoiceth not in plain truth about itself, resenting all correction and advice. Because it is loveless, it has no power or patience to bear, believe, hope and endure in dealing with imperfect folk. No matter if it speaks with the tongues of angels, has a mind for all knowledge, and unlimited capacity for faith—self is still a loveless thing that fails everybody, including itself in the end. No wonder that it should have to die daily.

Self-centeredness, organized into impersonal corporations of business or the state, is the deadliest thing known to the human race. Self-indulgence is slow death to the finer feelings that constitute a real person. Self-absorption is death to health, sincerity, effectiveness, and all the deeds of thoughtfulness that form the lasting ties of friendship and of home.

Living our own lives for ourselves is the source of all self-torture. Hence comes discouragement from comparison with those we envy; and the pain of nursing grudges and protecting hurt pride. Self-love guards financial interest by political opinions that have long

since been doomed. And disgust with a self that has made a fool of itself seems like final despair.

But there is always one thing we can do with a self that tortures us. Let it die; give it up in exchange for God's life in us—before we deserve it. Self-despair can be turned into the endless satisfaction of giving our best away, whether it be much or little, with no thought of self at all. Every kindness to another, every self-forgetful act can be a little death, making us slowly at home in the life eternal, so that even bodily death may lose its sting. For if God gives himself eternally to make our life and remake us in his image, then we can leave ourselves, and those whom we have loved and lost, in the final safety of divine love too amazing to understand, and too old to fail.

Is Christianity a code of behaviour that leads to defeat?

Many of us would like to say that our religion is no more than a perfect code of conduct. If so, then the Crucifixion demonstrated that the closer we come to the ideal the more certain our defeat by the forces that prevail in the world. Here would be a poor gospel: "This way is certain death!"

But when Christ said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," he was not thinking of an ideal plan to succeed in a worldly way. He believed that in giving life as a friend,

to the uttermost, he was becoming one with the spirit of God. He could say: "It is not I that live, but God that liveth in me." And ever since, men have come to feel that in him God's spirit took on our lot as though it were his own, to endure the worst that men could do and rise out of death itself as a continuing power in history. At least no other life has released such lasting power to reduce human pretensions and persuade men to die to their desires and come alive to a new life. This remains true no matter how often Christians have substituted their counterfeits for the original.

It has been said that either Christ's way of living for one's soul and believing in God is so utterly wide of the truth that it cannot stand up to the forces that dominate the world, or it is so rooted in fact that it can take defeat, knowing that God's victory is sure. The Crucifixion is either a great, grim decisive *No*, gathering up all contradictions, or it is a firm, steady undefeatable *Yes*, persisting through all contradictions."

Back in the years before Christ, the most honest skeptic in the Old Testament, after trying to satisfy every natural desire, reached this conclusion: "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity." After B.C. became A.D., the Apostle Paul wrote: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, therefore . . . be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The end of our natural life is not in the natural

success of this world, but is reached through death to self and a resurrection into a new life which joins with the Spirit of God, invincible, yesterday, today, and forever. This is the faith that has enabled men scanning the dubious future to reconcile "absolute confidence and absolute despair."

6. THE KINGDOM THAT COMES

It is fair to say that after repeating the phrase "Thy Kingdom come" all our lives, we seldom have noticed its curious imagery. It is not a kingdom on earth that we can make, but a kingdom that *comes*.

Making a new and better social order on earth is the job of human beings, and God will not do this job for us. We either keep at it or take the consequences.

In addition to what we can do, there are things that God does which are always a source of wonder and surprise. The transformation of the natural into the spiritual is not our doing. The change from self-centered intake to outgoing love is not achieved by self-interest and will power. Love is not man made. It *comes*, to mix with our self-interest and *radically alter its character*. We love only when love has first come to us and won us over.

What is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God is that new kind of life which emerges through death to self. All Christ's words about the Kingdom are figures of speech to suggest the surprising worth of a life that is at hand when self gives up.

It is like a "pearl" that no one would dream of finding in the open field. We live on the brink of a surprise which is ever waiting to come from the far side of the present moment.

It is also like a gradual development, as a mustard seed that develops into a tree, as a little leaven that gradually leavens the lump.

It is like a field where tares and wheat grow together until the harvest, just as our life is always a mixture of good and evil, from which different conclusions are finally drawn.

It is unlike a physical happening, such as a change in the social order, of which you *can* say "Lo here" or "Lo there." It is within you.

It is like an unexpected opportunity which you miss if you are not prepared, as the Virgins missed the marriage feast for lack of oil in their lamps.

It is like a straight and narrow way, where those who are conscious of their faults enter more easily than those who are satisfied with themselves.

It is something for which one would sell out all his desires, if he but knew.

It is like being born again, where an old life is not lost but remade into a different kind.

What is the meaning of the Biblical reference to the end of the world?

In the first century there was a current view that the end of the world was near, when God would set up his Kingdom by his own power and establish his rule. This faith grew out of desperation when the forces of evil had overwhelmed the forces of good, and human power seemed hopeless.

It is quite probable that Jesus shared this belief that the world would soon end, just as he doubtless shared the common view that the world was flat. After all, the truth which Christ introduced had to come under some sort of world view, at some particular time, clothed in the language of some contemporary thought. Knowledge of the truth he stood for did not require him to know how the world was shaped or how old it was, or how it would end. The life of the spirit that belongs to the Kingdom, whenever it might come—this is what he made as clear as day. Albert Schweitzer the medical missionary and organist, who spent much of his life investigating this New Testament belief in the end of the world, reached this simple conclusion: "His religion of love appeared as part of a world view that

expected a speedy end of the world. The essential element in Christianity as it was preached by Jesus . . . is this, that it is only through love that we can attain communion with God. All living knowledge of God rests upon this foundation; that we experience Him in our lives as will-to-love."

7. THE MEANING OF HISTORY

The biblical view of life sums up our human history as a continuous transformation of the physical and material into the personal and spiritual in a limitless community. The whole pattern could be defined thus: Creation, Perversion, Correction, Reclamation, and Re-birth into a new order that is eternal.

Which is more enduring, nationality or individual personality?

It is important to remember that our Christian belief in individual worth emerged out of a primitive tribalism of the Hebrews. At first the individual was submerged in the tribe. Everybody's security, strength and glory were in the tribe; and survival was survival of the tribe. But, unlike modern tribalism which makes the nation supreme, this Hebrew type made the tribe subject to the supreme will of God. The prophets saw this subordina-

tion to God more clearly than the mass of people, as the separate tribes became a nation. And when the nation was destroyed, and no outward bonds held the population together, there dawned in the mind of the prophet Jeremiah the new truth that the people were still responsible to God as individuals. It was that divine center to which each was related that kept them related to each other in a religious community.

Our whole conception of life took its shape from this historic experience which speaks to us out of the Bible. This constitutes a revelation of how an outward community can be transformed into an inner one of quite a different kind through conflict and frustration.

The outward community is a sort of training ground where men learn the importance of the inner life which is the chief end for which they were created. For it is this inner life which unites people down underneath exterior distinctions and creates a universal society within all human societies.

A French aviator has written of the way he rediscovered this old truth of the real end of life. When the shells came up to meet him with the threat of death, he suddenly realized for the first time that his life was not his body. He had taken care of that body for years, protected, fed, and clothed it, satisfied its desires, until he had unconsciously identified himself with it. But when death looked him square in the face, he knew that

life is what you are loyal to, what you do, and what you care for most—what you really are inside.

He experienced the mystery of rebirth into an eternal community of the shared life of the spirit which has God as the center. Our religion calls this community the Kingdom of God, which is an everlasting kingdom over which death has no dominion. It is both here “at hand” within us, and forever coming.

Part III

OUR FINAL DEPENDENCE

1. THE MORALITY OF SELF-RELIANCE

We are all born with a persistent and perverse desire to have our own way. The exercise of this self-will is essential to strong personality, but, confined to its own ends, it is the great troublemaker. With maturity we learn that our way must needs yield to something infinitely superior. We are not the lords of creation.

The basis of all common sense, and of science as well, is the recognition that in this universe we cannot have our own way and do as we please—in the long run. We are confronted by a "concealed imperative," which says, "You can have it this way, but not that way."

The simplest and most misunderstood phrase in the Lord's Prayer is an expression of our final dependence: "Thy will be done." This is equivalent to saying: "Let more be done than our egoism can account for." We reserve the pronoun "Thy" for deity alone and so distinguish the Creator's will from your will, my will, and all human wills put together. Our Creator's will can not be identical with our egoism and our ability any more than the sun, which warms the earth, can be made identical with it. We daily rely on something more being done with us than we can do or even know.

Is the supernatural dragged into our moral life as an extra?

We have all felt the strong drift of modern times away from reliance on God to reliance on ourselves. This drift began as a healthy reaction from a false expectation that the supernatural might intervene to do what we should do ourselves. God *never* does what we can do—that is our responsibility and no divine miracle worker ever takes it from us. But on the other hand we *cannot do* what our all-sufficient Creator alone can do. The modern claim to be self-sufficient has led us far astray from reality.

We are habitually interpreting the phrase "Thy will be done" as though it merely suggested something we should do. It thereby becomes an invitation to ourselves to do good, with a good-will. Thus by a simple twist of meaning, religion is reduced to doing good without God.

We Americans like the simplicity of doing good. The good we do is a handy excuse for not doing greater good that waits to be done. Simple action avoids wrestling with beliefs and coming to grips with the problems of human egoism. It is a convenient substitute for going to church and saying our prayers. It releases us from practices of contemplation and all deep thinking about sin and salvation. It sidesteps entirely the final

mystery of death as though that were not in the picture of human happiness.

Some have felt that trusting God to do his will is shifting responsibility. They have seen religion take the place of social action, and would cure the evil by letting social action take the place of God—which is meat and drink for human pride.

Others have argued that time taken out for attention to God is so much time lost from being very, very busy doing good, or laboring for the maximum happiness which, at any moment, can be demolished by misfortune.

Why is human good-will inadequate by itself?

Our self-will, unrelated to God, easily degenerates into enlightened selfishness, and worse. Our modern counterfeit for real Christianity is self-interested good-will, which, though better than ill-will, is not as good as it appears.

This counterfeit translates the gospel message—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men"—into something like this: "Leave out as irrelevant the part about 'God in the highest' and live a life of good-will without God. When we want others to leave us alone in peace, or when we wish to influence people and acquire friends for our own purposes, or when we would avoid labour

trouble that disturbs business and dividends, we should make clever use of good-will. Thus we make it safe to mind our own business and mind it profitably. If we want our labor union to take advantage of a crisis, we may use enough good-will to keep in the good graces of the public. If we want national peace and isolated prosperity with the highest possible standard of living, we simply let the world know of our good-will to all, and promise them access to what is left of the world's resources after we have attended to "obligations already undertaken" for ourselves.

In other words, "peace on earth, good will toward men" means: forget God, put our enlightened self-interest in the highest place, glorify that, and use good-will to serve our self-love so that we can be left in peace. We call this good-will, but it is self-will dressed up with sentimentality and cunning. It may become anti-Christian and devilish—a delusion and a snare.

This modern imitation of Christianity, so rich in good intentions, has been summed up in the following paraphrase of a Biblical sentence: "God so loved the world that he inspired a certain Jew to inform his contemporaries that there is a good deal to be said for loving one's neighbor."

Can self-reliance displace religion unconsciously?

In the last five hundred years we have been unconsciously shifting over from a God-centered to a man-

centered world. The result might be likened to an experience in my home when my children, finding an old record of a Beethoven sonata, bored a new hole in it about an inch off center, and then played it on the victrola from that center. It was the same great music, but it sounded like the cackling of fiends in hell.

That suggests what has occurred in our specialized education. We have made several centers in the disk of human existence, biological, psychological, sociological, and historical, and then played the record for our students from the different centers on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, expecting them to discover the tune.

Of course no sweeping statement about our age as against another can be entirely true. Every age has a center where the dominant interest is located. Since the Middle Ages this interest has been slowly moved away from God and the things that lie beyond the appeal of the senses. It is now localized in man's mastery of nature for the purpose of a material living on a grand scale.

Can we consider a religious interest as optional?

So long as the scientist works in his laboratory with the laws of nature, he can temporarily forget the question of God. So long as technology can make us comfortable and prosperous, we are all tempted to ignore God and the meaning of life. It is very easy to consider

religion a private option, as the communists would say, and assume that we can manage nature for our private ends with impunity.

Right now our easy claim to a managership of the universe for our own ends has been rudely shaken. We are caught in a catastrophic experience of correction, reclamation, revelation and rebirth; and our complacent yesterday can never be restored.

A reshift of our dominant interest from man and his ends to God and his purposes, will not start with the majority, who may yet bring more confusion upon us. The confusion can only be reduced by a new minority who believe, as Lincoln did that "God has his own purposes." They do not pretend to know it all, and are always open to a way "higher than our ways," and make no promise of final solutions. They form a saving remnant, a society of the conscientious who are ever ready to be corrected and made the instruments of a better future.

2. THE UNIVERSAL WILL

Obviously no human being can know the whole will of the creator. Historians cannot piece history together and give us the meaning of the vast picture puzzle. No study of nature can possibly tell us what it is for. We cannot by searching find out God and his will, but he

and his will can find us out. It is not unreasonable that the Creator should take the initiative and give such hints of his purpose as he could get through to us, just as a parent, whose mind is at first beyond the reach of his child, makes his will more and more known to the child as years go by.

Is "natural law" the will of God?

The Creator's will was done when the order of creation was established, once for all. When that order defies our wishes, we know we confront a will that is not ours. The prayer "Thy will be done" is equivalent to saying: Let the way of nature be considered fixed and done; let the structure of human nature be considered settled; let both be the unalterable expressions of the will of our Creator. And let us give ourselves up to understanding and obeying the laws of creation by which life comes to us.

Thomas Huxley disciplined his mind by constant meditation on the 119th Psalm, which he came to know by heart.

"Forever O Lord Thy word is settled in heaven,
Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.
O how I love Thy law. It is my meditation all the day.
Teach me O Lord the way of Thy statutes
Through Thy precepts I get understanding.
Therefore I hate every false way."

When error found him out, he could repeat:

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted
That I may learn Thy statutes
In faithfulness hast Thou afflicted me.”

This is human egoism submitting obediently to be taught by a will that is settled, for everybody, everywhere, and for all time—“on earth as it is in heaven.”

Is there a law for human nature which is the will of God?

The wrestling with compunction, of which we spoke, is like contending with another will. We all have inside information about compunction which does not conform to our desire, just as another human will refuses to be made into our own. However, we are always left with the difficulty of knowing what is right to do in a particular condition.

Many people try to tell others what God's will is, as if they had a mortgage on it. Tyrants, bigots, bossy people, self-righteous improvers of everybody but themselves, are the bane of life. Jesus spoke of them as people who “think themselves righteous and despise others.” A small boy once described a minister as a man who found out what you liked to do and then in the name of God told you not to do it.

The will of God for human nature will always be

greater than our interpretation of it but in our perplexity we are not left entirely in the dark. Much light has been given us through revealing personalities in a long tradition. We live by this light even when we forget the source whence the light came.

Recently I received a letter from a young Negro in the army who has suffered bitterly from the prejudice shown toward his people. Out of deep disillusionment he writes a terrific indictment against the moral codes of men: "As far as I am concerned, Man is a pretty sorry spectacle. He deserves neither love nor hate; only contempt for his adhesion to sham . . . I have no confidence in anything; I have learned to expect nothing of life." But over the page he adds: "I believe in a goodness that is independent of all human codes." That belief was an unconscious inheritance from an age-old source.

Tolstoy revolted against all convictions and codes, and described the struggle in the character of Levine in his novel *Anna Karenina*. Levine says: "In infinite time, in infinite matter, in infinite space, is formed a bubble organism; and that bubble lasts a while and bursts; and that bubble is me." To escape from senseless confusion, he read the great philosophers and theologians, but with little effect.

Then he found he was better off if, instead of reasoning, he went about living. For when he came to a fork in the road where a choice had to be made, something

infallible inside him knew the better from the worse. If he did not follow the better he was immediately disturbed.

As he considered this certain sense of direction, he noticed it was something given him out of his past. He could trace it back through a long line of people like an old peasant of whom his neighbor said: "He lives for his soul, he doesn't forget God. He wouldn't wrong a man." Tolstoy knew he had not patched together his own pattern of life. It came like a light that lightens every man coming into the world—a true light in a living Person who was, somehow, the creator's gift to us. When that gift has once been given, we are deeply determined by it, even when we think we are only making up our own minds.

Can conscience depend unconsciously on a given tradition?

We are all saturated, as it were, by a civilization which was based on the Bible. This is evident especially in people who behave like Christians while denying the Christian faith. Our most spontaneous acts, when they are "Christian," are the outcome of long exposure to Christian practice. Why are we ever thoughtful of others at our own expense? Why do we hesitate to offend another's conscience as though his life mattered to us? Why be ashamed of forgetfulness for which no one

could blame us? Why treat others as we would have them treat us? Why seek out people who need forgiving; why not let them go? Why suffer for the sin of others? Our sure sense of direction in such decisions has been given us out of the experience of ages affected by Christian influence which is fortified by the experience of the whole human race and by the best in all religions.

Jacques Maritain has indicated in an article in a recent issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* how our public life has been moulded unconsciously by our religious tradition. Something inside us most certainly believes that life does not simply go round in a meaningless circle; that a person has some inviolable right to be all of himself; that ordinary people have a dignity of their own to be respected like the dignity of a king; that a ruling caste must give way to a community of free men, each with a right to have his side heard; that the authority of a leader comes from people who give him custody of the common good; that we should be resigned to no system that interferes with the justice which makes friendship possible as a link in community. All this has been distilled from the lives of multitudes living out of a common inheritance.

3. THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

We have already given a general statement of the biblical view of life which has survived the test of centuries. In more detail we may now see how our knowledge of the will of God came into the world.

What were we created for?

With profound simplicity our religion affirms that what we were created for can capture the imagination of a little child. My two-year-old grandchild will listen with rapt attention when I act out the story of the Good Samaritan. When as the priest and then the Levite, I look at the wounded man in the ditch and pass by on the other side, she registers severe disapproval—even though I appear to be good, for I am on the way to church. When as the Samaritan I have compassion on the victim, bind up his wounds, move him to an inn on my horse, put him to bed and feed him everything the little girl likes, she makes the eager response: "Tell it again." That ageless quality of outgoing life in the Good Samaritan captured her imagination as though it satisfied her whole being.

We are all created to respond thus like a little child. Whenever someone enters our life to awaken gratitude and affection, we know we need that treatment for our

fulfillment. And whenever we are possessed by an interest in others for their good, we know we require that outlet to express our whole nature.

Before we can know all we should, we can be captured by different forms of self-forgetful life typified in the Samaritan. It appeals to us when we see faithfulness at work before results can be measured. Likewise we are affected by truthfulness and creativeness working in the dark, trusting the outcome to time. The spirit that goes out of itself in love, to be faithful in that which is least, to rejoice in truth and not in lies, to seek forever the unrealized possibilities—this spirit anywhere, in any work, under all conditions holds in its power the richest promise of life. Whereas the opposite qualities of selfishness, infidelity, falsehood, acquisitiveness can beget the devilishness which makes a hell of earth. The blessing of the one, and the curse of the other are self-evident in the long experience of the race.

According to Biblical faith, the capturing process, just described, is the way the Creator's spirit takes possession of our nature to transform it into the image of the Creator, for which it was originally designed.

The Norwood report on religious education in the English schools contains this pertinent statement on the way we come by our deepest convictions: "Religious consciousness grows from the environment, favorably and naturally if the environment is favorable and natural, atrophied and distorted if the environment is ma-

terialistic in its values, and purely competitive in spirit. *It is a growth from life that is lived."*

Where did our tradition originate?

The germinal conviction from which our faith developed affirms that a divine rightness, stronger than all human wrongness, is constantly active in the course of events. We owe this conviction, so far as we can trace it, to a spiritual genius named Moses.

When the Hebrew tribes were slaves in Egypt, he acted as their labour leader. Thwarted by the powers of the Egyptian tyranny, he fled to a desert place. There it was borne in upon him that man's effort to free people from injustice and frustration is supported by a divine purpose working in history and calling men, not merely to contemplation of the right, but to participation in the sufferings of men.

How clear this conviction was at the beginning no one can know. But it empowered Moses to set his people on the way to freedom and steadied him to endure their backslidings and ingratitude, so that he became the instrument of a living force that sustained the Hebrew people through centuries of persecution. He also furnished a foundation for the faith of the Mohammedan world, and set the stage for all that Christianity has done for mankind. There is no measuring the timeless effect of this insight that history is not a series of

senseless events but the scene of continuous correction and creation under God.

We trust this view because it makes more and more sense as we live by it, while its contradiction leads toward the chaos in which we find ourselves today.

Can the supernatural affect us without being magical?

There is nothing magical about this superhuman factor in events. It is forever out of our reach but it reaches us and remains involved in all the failures of creation, to do unexpected things with our incompetence.

Up-island on Martha's Vineyard, I witnessed an exhibition by an English sheep dog, who once had gone wild in the woods just following his own will. He was recovered and after months of training, he acted in the public exhibition as though nothing mattered to him save his master's will. Watching every move of the man's hand, listening to every word of command, the dog maneuvered the sheep into one pen, out into another and back into the field amid the cheers of the crowd, as no wild dog could have done. The change in the dog was like a bit of magic. But it was not magic, nor contrary to dog nature.

The man's mind, with all its knowledge, was absolutely out of reach of the dog, yet that superdog mind reached down to the dog's level, giving him

hints of what was wanted, correcting false moves, redeeming him from mistakes without ever violating the dog's freedom. The outcome was more than all the wisdom of dogdom by itself could either predict or achieve.

After this manner our imperfect world of persons is influenced by a superhuman rightness entering actively into it.

What are the alternatives to our traditional view?

There are only two other alternative faiths. One is the Oriental which finds the meaning of life, not in any of the parts and details of this earthly scene, but in the whole of which everything is only a part. The "whole" can only be reached by contemplation and escape from the things of the world. The other alternative is the age-old material view that we live in a purposeless, natural process, that has no use for our ideals and aspirations. Whatever is true in these two views can be preserved and fulfilled in the Biblical faith in a creator who is involved in all the resistance and incompleteness of his creation.

Is the vagueness of faith a serious drawback?

Vagueness is of the very essence of this faith. "Commit thy way unto the Lord" seems too indefinite for practical use. But a scientist's devotion to unattainable truth, does not seem to be too indefinite—it is a very

definite way of getting results. An ordinary person who trusts integrity does not mind its vagueness. He does good regardless of results, and thus proves what a man of integrity is worth. Every discoverer is first vaguely aware of some right way before he discovers it, or makes it practical or knows how people will respond to it.

If we are to keep our life open and growing, we have to be devoted to the unattainable and the unknown, without calculation. Thus we can take our leap in the dark, ever ready for correction, laboring at our best until the unpredictable can be revealed through us. Man cannot be fully man without the unreachable God reaching down into human affairs.

4. THE DIVINE CORRECTIVE

It is important to remember that the will of God keeps on being done whatever we may do. In our preoccupation with the moral side of religion, we are inclined to assume that the will of God is done only when "we do it."

But truth and right are not helpless without our support. The constitution of things is not subject to human

amendments. Great men have always acted as though the truth supported *them*, not as though they were responsible for the existence of the truth.

The will of God is eternal—entrenched in the fixed laws of nature and human nature. If we defy these laws they still stand, and there are ways by which we are reminded that the universe does not alter its course to suit our compass. We can stop obeying the law of love, but in so doing we cease to make friends. Whenever finite beings challenge the divine order of life, they have the order against them.

Therefore, final trust is to be placed not in man but in divine intervention as a power that is forever bringing to book what is unreal and untrue. Since we all fall short, we all live "under judgment." There are always three sides to every question: Your side, my side, and the right side. God is on the right side correcting the other two sides which are never all right. So we cannot have God entirely on our side of any human conflict.

How should we understand the "wrath of God"?

In the Bible there are two different ways of describing the corrective activity entering into all human affairs. One way is picturesque and primitive, and recedes further and further away from our modern thought. God is conceived in terms of an oriental monarch whose absolute power brooks no infringement of his law. He dispenses arbitrary punishment to all

offenders, that his majesty may be held in respect and fear. If he does not catch the offender at once, he will find him out in time.

It is in this framework that divine correction has been thought of as a "judgment" in the sense of "punishment," thus originating the elaborate imaginings about God as a wrathful judge who threatens sinners with the fires of hell. But we must remember that most of the familiar hell-fire dramatization came not from the Bible, but from Virgil's *Aeneid* by way of Dante's *Inferno* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Both Protestants and Catholics have taken undue advantage of this lurid picturesqueness to put the fear of God into people. "Punishment" and "wrath" are misleading words to connect with God, unless properly interpreted.

But leaving old language behind should not conceal the fact that these old terms stood for a profound truth. The "wrath of God" and "the judgment day" are symbols of the implacable correction and final reckoning that comes to all that is false and unreal and contrary to the laws of life. Separation from God and his will for our life would be the living death which has gone by the name of hell.

The other biblical way of describing divine correction precludes the representation of God as mad, or jealous of his majesty as men are. The prophet Amos uses the figure of God's "plumb line." Any construction that is out of plumb will be in danger of collapse. Jesus

used the figure of a house built on rock or sand. Whoever goes against the order of nature and builds on sand instead of rock, will find his house a shambles when the bad storm comes—no matter who is inside.

Another prophet, Isaiah, used what we might call the symbol of the "big stick." God will reduce the false pretensions of one nation by using some other nation as a club; and then in turn will bring down the pride of the clubbing nation in the same fashion.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the "wrath of God" as if it were an impersonal operation, bringing on natural consequences. He never says that God is mad. Of the corrupt Romans he wrote, "God gave them up" to their inordinate desires. God let them alone, drifting in the tide of their godless ways. When one sails a boat in a tideway among rocks, he must keep the wind in his sails or the tide will take him on the rocks. To be out of the wind is to be in the grip of the tide.

It frequently happens that our course of action comes to a head in a highly wrought state that immediately precedes change. These critical times show where the tide has been taking us, while we were not watching our sails. We never plan the crisis; the crisis surprises our plans. If we stand ready to cooperate with change, some new creation, some new style of life may begin. If we miss the chance, the tide of events will precipitate another crisis calling for new decisions. Life is a

succession of crises that correct our judgments and sharpen the distinction between what we want and what we are created for.

These metaphors are never outdated. Science today trusts to trial and error with continuous correction from the order of nature which is foolproof and not man made. So in the world of personal relations there is an ordered way (a "structure," as we say today) by which we are made interdependent to fulfill each other's lives. For better or for worse we must take the consequences of each other's living—there is no other way for us to complete ourselves. We may defy the structure, but it is still there, and the bad results which follow in their own time will illustrate its finality.

Is correction just an automatic process?

The natural consequences of living come in a somewhat mechanical way, but the process is not like a machine. No machine can make moral distinctions and have an interest in the correction of persons in order to remake their lives. This *personal moral interest* was what the older picture of God, as a stern yet merciful judge, was designed to preserve. All religious terms are approximate symbols, not accurate definitions.

But there always remains something obscure and hidden in the whole operation of correction. "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform."

A student once said to me that he had put together his ideas into a rather satisfactory philosophy of life—except for a way to take care of the problem of evil. For that he saw no solution save to close his eyes and forget it as best he could. Such a disposition of an ultimate question is characteristic of most of us, while we pull down the shades on the world's evil and live within our comfortable life, saying to ourselves, "It never can happen here." But this effort not to see what is going on is like a game Tolstoy used to play in his childhood. The family would take turns at going behind a door to see how long each could stay there and *not* think of a white bear.

Why are rules of right and wrong so often negative?

It is natural that the will of God should first strike us as largely negative: "Thou shalt not." Blundering about among the laws of life, ignorant and defiant, we have to be stopped in our tracks. In this world, as someone has said, "[We can do as we please—and pay for it." But being made to reap what we sowed, with no relief, would drive us mad. Only out of such preliminary despair did it first dawn on men that the divine intervention seeks not simply to judge and correct, but to reclaim something from our failures. Judgment and mercy are one and the same. Correction and forgiveness and deliverance from evil are one continuous operation, and must always be considered together.

5. GOD'S WILL AND EVIL

It has been a painful discovery to many that we may become involved in evil when our intentions are for the right. Like the ancient Greeks, we sometimes think of God as separated from all evil, and as a result we are surprised when we cannot separate good from evil in ordinary affairs. We are equally surprised when good people suffer from evil for which they are not entirely to blame.

Our faith in a divine corrective acting in human events must mean that God is entangled with evil to make something new out of it. All through the Bible honest minds are wrestling with this issue, and being shown new light through repeated catastrophe. The steps of their progressive understanding should be in our minds today.

Is there any simple answer to the problem of evil?

At first the answer was over-simplified as in the story of the crossing of the Red Sea. A people fleeing from slavery took advantage of a break, when prevailing winds had made fordable shallows, while their pursuers were caught in the midst of the returning waters when the wind had fallen. In the retelling, that story was further and further detached from the event

until it became the great symbol of faith. The oppressor trying to overtake the oppressed was himself overtaken. As we look back over long ranges of history we see how true this is.

Evil is not always neatly corrected on the spot, and good people are not always safely delivered. The book of Ecclesiastes voiced the sceptic's honest doubt. Judging life by appearances, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." This book came out of tragic times and it does not mince matters. No modern sceptic has ever had worse things to say than are found in this diatribe. Good and evil occur so evenly mixed in the lives of all of us that they cancel each other out and add up to zero—vanity. Following every party, there is a "morning after." Women are a blessing, but only one in a thousand can be trusted. Fortune and misfortune, happiness and sorrow, come alike to all, and death is no respecter of persons. Wisdom is excellent, but much study is wearisome to the flesh. If a man achieves success and amasses a fortune, fools come after him to undo his work and spend his money in folly. So the best thing to do is to make the most of patches of happiness in a meaningless existence.

The case could not be put more bluntly. Doubtless this honest book would have been lost from the Bible had not some orthodox editor attached a note at the end to make it acceptable. "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

For God shall bring every work unto judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

The book of Job represents a further stage of this discussion. How can a man, who sees only the present, appraise any catastrophe when he cannot see the end of it in the far future? Only God knows the future. A divine purpose that spans the ages from the beginning into the unknown cannot be justified at any one moment—it can only be trusted.

Still later than this argument in Job, came the teaching of the prophet concerning the "suffering servant" of God. While some suffering is the result of man's wrong doing, much of it comes to the innocent. Because men live in inescapable relations, they must share the worst as well as the best. They bear the sins of the laggards. Pioneers pay the price for living ahead of their times. Such "suffering servants" are the agents through whom the work of creation is done.

This idea of a saviour who suffers was supremely confirmed in the best man ever sent to earth. Christ embodied the will of God working against the prejudices of the respectable, the hatreds of the mob, the suspicions of the powerful, and the bigotry of the religious. He was the symbolic victim of the universal perversity of human nature. But even in his tragic fate creation continued to bring unmeasured good out of the consequences of evil. The good that was crushed to

earth in him rose again as a living spirit, creating an unprecedented company of people who willingly suffer for the sins of the world, as partners in a redemptive movement.

Can we trust our own righteousness?

With this Biblical view of life to guide us we must challenge our too simple confidence in the victory of our own righteousness. John Oldham of England, in the thick of war, wrote this warning: "It is a fatal mistake to assume that good and evil in life are ever separated into two sharply opposed camps. The forces of spiritual decay are at work among ourselves. Those who fight in a righteous cause are tempted to trust in their own righteousness, which is tainted with frailty and is far less deep-rooted and stable than they suppose; and may at any moment reveal itself as utterly inadequate. It was a profound insight of Christ into the realities of life that sinners may be nearer salvation than the righteous."

The comparison of our best with another's worst leaves confusion thrice confounded. In the Civil War, Charles Sumner scorned the South for its cruelty in exploiting slaves, but never spoke of the exploitation of laborers in the industry of his home state. No wonder the people in the South wished to secede from such northern hypocrisy.

Are we always free to choose between good and evil?

The truth is we are all under correction, and one form of correction appears in *a relentless reduction of choice*. The more bad choices we make, the fewer good choices are left. If we decide to ignore the symptoms of a diseased appendix, we have made a bad choice; and if we choose to evade the issue again and again, there comes a time when only two choices are left. We may either die, or be carved open with a knife. The choice is no longer between good and evil, but only between greater and lesser evils. After the first World War we neglected good choices until on a fatal day we could choose only between the evil of war and the evil of tyranny.

We cannot call war right, as though God willed a wholesale murder. Nor can we call it simply a punishment for our sins, for too many innocent are always hurt. In one way or another we were all involved in the causes of a world war, little nations and big; and to some extent we reaped what we sowed. But people in occupied countries endured horrors all out of proportion to any guilt that was theirs. They were not like willing martyrs for a cause. They were victims of bestial cruelty such as we thought belonged to barbaric days long gone. Thus were the guiltless caught under the wheels of the juggernaut which we all helped to create.

But even senseless misery is not outside the vast process of correction which, through such tragedy, stirs the whole world against the oppressors.

Contradictory as it may seem, much good is created out of the evil of war, and it is not confined to the heroic virtues fanned into flame in the most ordinary of men. There is the lasting good that comes from freedom won, from the surprising development of individual capacities, from the stimulus to scientific research and human ingenuity. No one knows what universal blessing is yet to come from the forced recognition of interdependence, now awaiting embodiment in world organization. All such benefits can be admitted without calling war righteous. A Harvard professor has remarked that the social ills which were too much for us in peace were successfully handled under the pressure of the most hideous war in history. But he did not deduce from this that wars are the health of the state, and a good policy to practice at regular intervals. Whatever benefits follow modern war, they come *after* the worst consequences have piled up a cost too great to bear.

6. NO UNBELIEVERS

It is a fatal mistake to think that when men cease to believe in the will of God, they then become unbeliev-

ers. Men are incurable believers. If they stop believing in God, they transfer their faith and devotion to something nearer by. And should they become desperate, they will put their faith in the biggest organization and the strongest man in sight.

How far can we believe in the human race?

When the Roman Empire was beginning to decay, the Apostle Paul noticed the general tendency to worship "the creature more than the creator." People shifted faith from the "incorruptible God" to "corruptible man."

The old pagan gods were losing their hold both on the intellectuals and on the masses; and the power of a great Emperor seemed the only thing left to trust. He, like all of his kind, had risen to power through terror and bloodshed. To keep his power, he sought more power. He took over one department of state after another, finally assuming control of religion. He was called "Augustus"—a religious word, describing one to be looked up to with reverence and awe. Reverence for power instead of principle infected the Emperor's subordinates, until corruption ate like a cancer into the whole body politic.

The capacity for devotion, when left unattached, is always a dangerous thing. In an hour when men were reduced to despair in Germany, they, like the Romans, turned to trust the biggest thing in sight. Then ensued

the corruption of a whole people who were induced to worship "the creature more than the creator." Paul said that the Romans were given over to a "reprobate mind; . . . being filled with all . . . covetousness, maliciousness . . . envy, murder, deceit, . . . whisperers, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, . . . covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." That was written some two thousand years ago and describes, to the letter, what has happened before our eyes today. We did not believe it could happen in our time. We were civilized. So was Rome. But civilization is not salvation. The deification of man tends toward the total corruption of life.

Let it be stated afresh that human nature without God trusts too much in corruptible man. Masses of people today, drifting away from a religious tradition, have been ruled by dictatorial methods in industry, and have not learned to think or to share responsibility. All too many are rootless and displaced. They own nothing, feel themselves exploited for another's profit, and prefer irresponsibility. When such folk become desperate in unemployment, they tend to let morals and religion go by the board, while they trust the "leader" who has power to get things done.

Whenever people feel insecure and inferior, they are fascinated by greatness—even if it be evil genius. Their religious nature is designed to look up from the human to the divine, but when this nature is left unsat-

ified it reaches out to human greatness, which is so easily corrupted by power.

Men who have worked in the Big Brother Movement, befriending the first offenders in our children's courts, have found the reason why boys become gangsters in the city slums. Suffering under the poverty of parents who are helpless to provide a living, these boys admire the gangster on the corner who can have what he wants and "gets away with murder." Salvation from this fascinating temptation comes only when a boy has a good friend for whom it is worth going straight.

7. FAMILIAR DIFFICULTIES

(a) Moral Obligations.

Can moral obligation be explained without God?

Through our scientific training we have developed a passion for explanation. The desire to clear up mysteries due to ignorance has become a noble obsession; but it easily degenerates into undue eagerness for simplification. We are tempted to reduce such a mystery as moral obligation to something easily understood.

However, as we have already pointed out, an explanation that explains away the fact that started us thinking is an oversimplified explanation. We have

space for only an outline of the most common attempts to oversimplify.

First, there is the theory that moral obligation is merely a good old custom inherited from our parents and predecessors. True. We do first learn our obligations from those who preceded us. But that does not mean that the distinction between right and wrong is a human invention. We inherited from our ancestors our knowledge of electricity; but they did not invent electrical force. That is a god-given resource beyond man's power to originate.

A cruder theory is that the sense of obligation comes from the pressure exerted on us by others asserting their rights. The more pressure they can exert, the more obligation we feel. Only where others can produce enough pressure do we feel under obligation to mind their interests. This leads straight to the doctrine that force is the final authority.

A more plausible theory makes social approval the source of obligation. We ought to do what society approves as useful to society. But who decides what is good for society? Society as a whole cannot decide. What social group can be impartial? Some leader or clique always arises to tell his followers what they ought to do. Social approval *alone* ends in tyranny. "The love of Man (alone) leads to the oppression of men."

The most subtle theory reduces all altruistic obliga-

tion to farsighted self-interest. We are told that altruism is only egoism with a telescope. It is looking out for self, only looking farther; but we never can see far enough to discern all the consequences. We have to act before the reports are all in. What we call our long-run view may not be long enough. Hitler saw further than his victims who were not looking beyond the end of their noses; but he was not right despite his farsightedness. Furthermore, when we feel an honest obligation, the intrusion of self-interest strikes us as insincere and undesired.

All these oversimplified theories, instead of strengthening the sense of obligation, have tended to weaken it and increase moral confusion in the world. It seems at times that the only fixed principle left is the principle that there are no fixed principles.

Have we any fixed standard for moral obligation?

Many are confused today by rediscovering the ancient truth that goodness is never a fixed thing; it is always unique and original in every situation. There is no man-made pattern of behaviour that can be taken from the past, as we collect antique furniture for a modern house. The good that can be done (not talked about) in any situation is a combination of what ought to be, what circumstances require and permit, and what we are able to do and induce others to do with us. That combination is always unique and original. The only

good thing, according to Jesus, is a good will seeking to make the most good out of any circumstance. Imperfection is therefore always mixed with human goodness.

This lack of fixedness leads men not to abandon what is right, but rather to think that right and wrong can dwell quite naturally together. They can be one person at one time, and another at another, without worrying too much about the distinction. Some students, on being asked what they thought of free love, replied that the principle of free love was all right, but it did not work out very well. They could not trust the principle they believed in.

How characteristic of our time is the incongruous conglomeration of good and evil. We believe in the truth, but we are used to a daily bombardment of advertising and propaganda which are a travesty of the truth. Refined and cultured women can swear like troopers. Sophisticated murder in movies and books is quite domesticated with our better taste. We are exposed to everything until we are shocked by nothing.

When we read the classics in our literature, like Shakespeare, we find good and evil normally mixed in human characters. That is true to life. But the great writers never fail to remind us that though tares and wheat grow together, in the end they yield harvests that are distinguished from each other.

What is there outside ourselves that is forever fixed?

We have already noticed that, according to our religious view of life, the only fixed and final thing is the purpose of the Creator who ordained the constitution of things, once and for all, and in that scheme of laws seeks to transform the natural man into the spiritual image of his Creator. The scientists working with nature, and all of us working with human beings, can unite on this unchanging purpose, which is independent of all human theories. The prophet Isaiah once defined a member of the king's household as a man "fastened like a nail in a sure place." His predecessor had been a shifty politician, changing with opportunity. This man was fastened to something so unchanging that you could *hang conclusions on him*.

Life grows in integrity and meaning when we realize that, whatever we do, somebody is bound to hang a conclusion on it. Our life always leaves some conclusion for others to make, whether we intend it or not. Once, on a cold night in winter, I noticed that the water in the gauge on my furnace was low. To insure good heating, I turned on the tap, and while the boiler was filling I attended to the fire and the ashes, and then went up to bed—leaving the tap open by mistake. At three in the morning I awoke to find the house like a barn, and the cellar flooded with water. I intended to

warm the house, but I left another conclusion to be drawn, and it was.

(b) Omnipotence of God.

Is God all-powerful to guarantee our happiness?

Writing on the mystery of pain, Professor C. L. Lewis states the popular notion of omnipotence in a syllogism: "If God were good he would wish to make his people happy; and if God were almighty, he would be able to do what he wishes. But his creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness or power or both."

There seem to be two reasons for misunderstanding omnipotence. Appearances, first of all, are against any moral omnipotence as far as the natural world is concerned. The forces of nature have no morals. Morals have to do with human relations and natural forces are not human. Muscle has no moral character, and moral character has no muscle.

Then again, we suffer from a familiar misconception of omnipotence. If we were asked what we would do with omnipotence, we would offhand think of having power to do everything; but there is no power that can do everything. Augustine said wisely, "Nothing which implies contradiction falls under the omnipotence of God." Even God cannot be expected to make two plus two equal five.

The Bible affirms that the Creator of the universe has the power needed to create the world and us. He also can carry on his moral purpose to make and remake the natural into the spiritual, and bring good out of evil. To be omnipotent, in the Biblical sense, is to be all-sufficient.

Why hasn't God won a moral success with the human race?

It is not possible to make men good by force from outside, no matter how great the force. We are free to disobey God and make a frightful mess of things; but *God never gives up*. Nothing we do can stop his purposes of creation, correction, and remaking. The human race never is a finished product in this world. Men will always stand in need of redemption. They have never yet exhausted the patience of God and never will.

Does God authorize everything that happens?

God authorized freedom. Without it we would be the robots which dictators love. And having authorized freedom and all its possibilities, God is never taken unaware by anything that might happen. He can use all things to promote his judgments, which show up what is wrong and open the way for recovery. He is ready for all contingencies.

Augustine thus summarizes the problem: "The things which God rightly wills, he accomplishes even

by the evil wills of bad men. The evil could not be done if he did not permit, nor does he permit it unwillingly but willingly; nor would he who is good permit evil to be done, were he not omnipotent to bring good out of evil."

Does God know everything beforehand?

It is sufficient to say that the Creator knows the possibilities of his universe and is never caught off guard. Calvin and his followers preached predestination as a rather unfortunate way of saying that he who authorizes the universe is equipped to meet all possible emergencies. God and his creative love will always have the last word.

Part IV

OUR ENTANGLEMENT IN NECESSITIES

1. MAKING A LIVING

Many of the most profound perplexities of living are described in familiar sayings that pass between us like well-worn coins. We often speak of the struggle to "keep body and soul together." There is more to that than meets the eye.

Today the business of earning our daily bread is so preoccupying that religion, which has to do with the soul, is like an intruding visitor during working hours. It is proper in its place, over a week-end, some people say, but there is not much room for it in the tough world where men are men. Some frankly leave it at home, like the young man who said that he kept his Christianity for his family and friends and kissed it good-bye daily when he went to work.

Is life more than making a living?

It is not too much to say that for masses of people making a living is the meaning of life. Many a thoughtful man in the armed forces has been perturbed that so many of his fellows who were magnificent at the front, have such shallow reasons for living when they return to peace.

In the Lord's Prayer, the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," turns attention to the difficult relation of body and soul in ordinary life. Two points need to be made clear regarding this oft-repeated request.

First, the pronouns are social pronouns. "*Our* Father who art in heaven . . . give *us* this day *our* daily bread." Here is the stage setting, so to speak, of all our existence. Our Creator has set "the solitary in families," and families in society from which no individual can be disentangled.

The pronoun "I" stands for our singular, unique relation to the Creator, but it is never independent of the pronouns "we" and "our." It is never safe nor true apart from them. Every activity of the Creator is always *in* each of us, *over* each of us, and *between* us. As Paul said: "One God and Father of us all—who is over all, through all, and in you all."

Second, this request for daily bread stands between a petition for God's will to be done and the pleas for forgiveness and deliverance from evil. The interests of the body and of the soul are inseparably tied up with each other. Our souls are made or unmade in the daily struggle with material necessities.

Is it true that our souls are most affected by the way we work?

We cannot make a living without affecting our souls, for better or worse. We cannot exist as souls on

earth unless, by hook or by crook, we can secure a living.

In other words, we are not disembodied spirits who can grow, each by himself, in some vacuum where we have no need to consider material necessities.

Christianity is in truth a very materialistic religion in its concern, all down the ages, for physical welfare. It says that God knows "ye have need of these things." It also confronts us with that question to which we know the answer: "What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?" We have fought a world war against soulless men who wished to gain the whole world and treat people like soulless things.

Any visitor from Mars, with half an eye, could see that our secular world on which we depend for a living, has no religious strategy for keeping souls alive.

Human efficiency, working with science and organization, strengthens the impression that men can do very well without reference to God. The machinery of civilization is invented and guided by human minds, controlled by human interests, and driven by human wills, individual and collective. The vast enterprise of the business community affords the main outlet for men's energies. To common men the organizations of labour furnish the satisfaction of belonging to something bigger than themselves, and give a sense of community in the cause of the common good. For millions

this union with others in the struggle for a living is the only religion they understand.

Too often lip service is paid to religion because its virtues are useful in the great game of making money. Conservatives may support religion as a stabilizer of the existing commercial order. A heckler in Hyde Park, London, asked a street preacher what religion could do to help labour obtain what it wanted, as though God were the means and profit the end.

It is a sad misunderstanding when men think of their souls as a means to an increased income. It bodes ill for a civilization when the making of human character becomes more and more estranged from our daily work of earning our bread. It is nothing short of tragedy when a whole civilization is so arranged that the necessities of the body and the demands of the soul become divided against each other.

Why is it so easy for practical life to be divorced from religion?

Certain things are always essential in practical life, whether we are religious or not. No amount of religion can make anyone a farmer if he is ignorant of agricultural science. Knowledge of spiritual matters is no substitute for scientific efficiency, technical skill, organizing ability or business and political sagacity. Certainly a religious spirit cannot ignore the hard, independent fact of power in human affairs.

Baron von Hügel contributed the suggestive idea to religious thought that a creator always has to set his creation apart from himself, and give it an independence of its own. The maker of a motor car has to give the car its independence so that millions can make it run on all sorts of errands, good and bad. If, by accident, it runs over people in the streets, no one would think of blaming its creator.

Likewise God the Creator has set his creation apart with an independence of its own. He has established all the laws of nature in their own right, so that a scientist in his laboratory could rely on those laws whether he believed in God or not. He has given us our natural bodies and minds with their laws of health and ways of functioning. He has granted us wills of our own, free to act even against the laws of the Creator.

The Creator never "takes back" any of the laws of creation that he has once established. If he should stop the force of gravity for a moment to save a child from falling out of a window there would be chaos everywhere.

Can religion ever ignore the "science of what is possible now?"

Religious belief cannot save a doctor from learning the scientific truths required in his profession. Religion can and should influence politics and business, as leaven leavens a lump of dough—but leaven is never meant to

be the whole lump. Politics in the best sense is the "science of what is possible," affording practical ways to direct self-interest toward the common good and not against it. Business and labour develop the science of utilizing all sorts of skills and resources to increase production and income for the endless needs of unsatisfied men.

When we accept all these resources and responsibilities we should be constantly reminded that *they are gifts* intended for the service of the Creator of human souls. Divorced from their appointed purpose they become devilish, so that things which are good and necessary turn into veritable enemies of the souls of men.

When accepting the independence of the creation, we should not assume that the Creator leaves it alone after giving it a start.

2. THE HIDDEN GOD

Ever since the scientific era began, we have been freeing the world of our daily bread from the restraints of bigoted religion. The result has been an expansion of possibilities that passes imagination.

However, our very respect for what our hands and minds have done has too easily blinded us to the primary question: "While we were making a living with

our improved equipment, what kind of people have we become in the process?" The making or unmaking of character has not been divorced from making a living.

How can we tell where personality is being created?

Biblical religion insists that God's chief purpose in creation is the making of personality. That is always an obscure operation. We never can see just where our character is being made. If our secular independent world seems godless and often totally indifferent to personality, we should recall the Biblical doctrine of "the hidden God." He is never absent, but always hidden.

A rather primitive expression of this truth is found in the quaint story of Gideon and the Midianites. Gideon was told to reduce his army from 32,000 to 300 on the eve of a big battle. If the army was too strong, the people would become proud and say, "Mine own hand hath done it." The hidden God would become more noticeable when men were not blinded by their own accomplishments.

The old story was right about human pride obscuring God, but it was wrong in supposing that the supernatural can displace the natural. To advise dismissing an army that victory might come by supernatural power, would be like saying: "Shut out natural science that

we might preserve a place for supernatural religion."

The doctrine of the "hidden God" means that the obscure operation of creating personality goes on, not apart from the world where we make a living, but in it. Character is made in the tensions of human wills and amid the buffetings of the fixed order of creation. Something tough and unyielding is required, just as resistance is essential to the growth of muscle.

Precisely where human wills conflict and interests compete there we learn cooperation as nowhere else. Where material goods are unevenly distributed, there we are forced to think seriously of each other, and organize our world accordingly. Where men deal with fixed laws of nature, there the scientific mind is developed—and nowhere else. Where we are obliged to live with all sorts of people there our character comes to maturity. Where our natural desires conflict with our higher aspirations, and selfishness competes with friendship, there immortal souls are fashioned out of our material life. Where the indifference of the natural world and the suffering we inflict on each other appall us, there the invincibility of the human spirit is most clearly revealed.

The hidden operation of making personality proceeds and is active in the very world which seems so indifferent to persons. The Creator is not absent but hidden.

How can the most be made out of life from day to day?

Since we cannot see the hidden God making our life as we work, our most effective attitude is to "trust and obey." This is not sentimental piety but hard common sense. If God, in secret ways, is ever making new meaning out of disorder and evil, then we should permit the Creator to work his will upon us. Our preferences should not be allowed to stand in the way.

In any situation, however befogged and contradictory, we can offer our best and hold ourselves ready to be shown, to be taught, to be used, to be changed into a more experienced and mature person.

To make the most sense out of life, the way is plain for anyone. You start with a body which you have to feed. In due time you have a family to support. You enjoy becoming a person on whom others can rely. You find it takes all sorts of people to give you a broader point of view. You become involved with others who are trying to make a living for themselves and their families. This, if you let it, makes you a citizen interested in the labour problem, the managerial problem, the race problem, and the international problem. Every-day business in a machine age connects you with everybody. All the multiplying connections, if you are willing, can be used to make you a representative

human being who would share the life of your fellows without limit. And whenever you fall back into selfishness, you will need to be remade—over and over.

To stay willing, and let yourself be made over in incalculable ways is the religious attitude at its best. For the lesser alternatives are to throw up your hands and become a quitter; or to go sour and bitter and useless; or to forget your soul and say, "I will look out for myself and my crowd. I will eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow I die."

And there's the rub—you die. You brought nothing into the world and you carry nothing out. But once a man, tempted in all points as we are, lived "for the love of God for all men" and was not afraid to die in that service. His victory became the eternal demonstration that death has no dominion over any human being who, while seeking the possessions he needs, discovers the life that consists not in the things that he can possess.

This transformation of the natural into the spiritual and immortal life in a limitless community, is, we repeat, the never-ending business of the hidden God. He is a continuous Creator. And the Biblical symbol of the "last judgment" suggests that it is finally heaven or hell for each one to live with the kind of person he has allowed himself to become.

3. VARIETIES OF HUMAN RELATIONS

Why has glib talk of brotherhood been so misleading?

Our simple notions of brotherhood do not fit the double nature of human relationships which makes it necessary to treat people both as persons and as things. The complexity of this double relation can be dramatically shown in the Old Testament story that centers around a battle-axe of a woman named Jezebel. Her husband, King Ahab, wanted to acquire some neighboring real estate to enlarge the palace garden. But the land he wanted was the vineyard and ancestral home of Naboth, who had brought up his family there until the meaning of his life was centered in that property. To all the king's offers Naboth said no. The king, like a spoiled child, complained to his wife that Naboth would not give him what he wished.

Then the old battle-axe got in her work. She trumped up a treason trial, hired some cheap liars, convicted Naboth before the public, and confiscated the property. The lie was exposed when Elijah, one of the moral rebels in a rotten community, told the king that he drew a circle around his own little world, and left

out human beings as though they were nobodies. Elijah stood as the eternal prophet of God, insisting that each man had a right to a meaning within a meaning that is larger than all the little circles we draw to leave each other out.

Jezebel treated Naboth as a utility for her purposes. Elijah defended Naboth as a person who had a meaning and value of his own. The tragedy of the world is not that there are so many people with Jezebel's attitude but that both these attitudes are permanently combined in each of us. We deal with people both as utilities and as persons.

Can we help treating people as things?

Let a very charming girl cross the Princeton campus and nothing can prevent her from becoming an object of observation. No one can know her as a person until he can meet her, so for the time being she remains a fascinating object drifting across the landscape. When we go to our favorite food shop, the man behind the counter is a utility who stands between us and starvation, just as the haberdasher is a utility who shields our nakedness from the public gaze.

In like manner the psychologist analyzes us as cases; business needs us as customers without benefit of personal introductions; factories must have hands to run machines; doctors must treat us as patients, or guinea

pigs; the army takes us as cogs in a military machine.

It is sentimental to think that, if we were only good enough, we would always treat people as persons. So long as we must promote the world's business, organize trade, study disease, or paint portraits, we will on occasion treat persons as objects to be observed, manipulated, and used.

The more organized our mass-production civilization becomes, the more acute is the problem of keeping alive as persons. Blindness to the danger accentuates our difficulty. While *talking* of brotherly love, we *use* other people for our purpose and they use us for their purposes; and soon the stronger are tempted to exploit the weaker. Straightway the so-called "weaker" organize their strength to oppose the stronger. And finally the public wants a government to manage everybody. Instead of dreaming that such a contest of interests can be outgrown, we must realize that the "haves" and the "have nots" are always with us, even in a classless society. The struggle with this problem is the raw material out of which real character has to be made, real freedom won, again and again.

What influence for growth is missing in collective action?

In these impersonal relations, something vital is missing without which they tend to destroy personality

and true community. We need a constant recognition of the other aspect of our double relation. People who have been objects may, in a moment, be turned into persons—and vice versa.

Once in wartime, when taking a taxi across New York City, I used the driver as though he were a mere part of the driving wheel, and he accepted me like a load of coal to be delivered. When conversation at last broke the silence, he told me he had a son in the country's service; and I replied that I had two sons in the Navy. Looking at me in his mirror the driver said, "You aren't old enough to have sons like that." I asked him how old he thought I was, and he replied, "You aren't a day over forty-five." After such a complimentary guess, things took a friendly turn. We had met as persons, even though he went on mechanically, driving the car (thank God) and I continued to be a paying load.

There we were on the opposite sides of the class struggle. He was a member of a labour union and I was a member of the bourgeoisie subsisting on endowed funds in a private university. But we achieved a personal relationship. That modicum of personal contact in the midst of our impersonal relations did not abolish the impersonal necessities of transportation, but transformed them into a new possibility. Collaboration in labour difficulties would have been easier in that personal atmosphere.

How is real community different from collective action?

The double nature of our relations indicates how we are always involved in a double purpose. We unite with others both to make a living and to give life a meaning—and one purpose does not displace the other. Both purposes are always in a tension with each other, with no perfect solution anywhere in sight. From this conflict we learn that our enduring satisfactions lie in some community of life that is more than a convenience for obtaining our desires.

Joseph Conrad, in the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, says that the scientist (and he might have added the business men and the advertisers) appeals to qualities that fit us for making a living in the endless quest for more things. But the artist appeals to the "invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts—to solidarity in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn."

Conrad is not describing a natural bond of convenience; but a spiritual bond of a higher order of satisfaction. He tells of what we all experience in our families, where at first we are bound to others by necessity. Some parents try to maintain the old bond by

threatening—"So long as you take our money, you do what we want." In well-ordered families, however, that original relation of dependence ripens into a two-sided companionship, even while the home ties are relied on for support. Life is more and more a "solidarity in joy, in sorrow, in aspiration, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other." For this solidarity lies in interests we can share without losing what we give. It is true communion. It is the only possible communism where private possessions become public possessions in a shared life full of meaning.

4. THE USE OF POWER

Our material needs bring us into conflict with each other. Human conflicts require the use of some form of power; and we have to take its possibilities of good and evil together. Like the adventure of marriage, it is "to have and to hold, for better, for worse."

Can religion replace power?

It is a most perilous illusion, common among Christians, to expect religion somehow to take the place of power. A clergyman recently claimed it was the church's business to tear out all lust for power from the human heart; but the need of power cannot be removed. Acci-

dents have come from the power of gravity; but we do not dream of tearing out gravity from the core of the universe. We learn to work with it. Power is a permanent part of life. It is neither possible nor desirable to reduce all behaviour to the sweet and amiable gentleness of sheltered folk, who depend on others for the rough business of maintaining order and keeping the supply lines open.

In all practical relations we must learn to handle three kinds of power, which do not exist separated from each other. We will always need some power over people. It may be no more than protection or mild restraint, though it may change to military force and absolute tyranny. We will also need power for people, and it may range from easy charity to a Christ-like passion to be "the servant of all." We will need, more than all else, power *with* people, and this form may vary from friendship among thieves to the supreme leadership that can win the free devotion of men, and enable them most fully to express themselves.

In our families we start with absolute power *over* helpless children, but that is modified by power acquired *for* their protection and support. And we cannot stop there with paternalism, else we spoil their initiative and make them into parasites. The aim from the beginning is to develop power *with* them, so that we can awaken their initiative and bring out their own independent powers in a mutual relationship. Nowhere

can we neatly separate power over our children, power for our children, and power with our children.

How shall we mitigate the struggle to "get ahead?"

The urge for power to get ahead and stay ahead is the prevailing motive in the world of affairs where we make a living. If we were all like an affectionate family, we could solve all difficulties with the method of love; but as things are we must make what arrangements we can to direct self-interest toward mutual help and security.

Unfortunately our life has been so organized that we tend to live at the expense of others. Our society has become inverted and business, though it may desire to function as a servant of public needs, tends to take advantage of public need to promote its profits. Individuals are better than the system, and the system is ever frustrating the best intentions of individuals. The profit motive, which must here be the guide of policy, is always too biased or short-sighted to embrace the public interest as a whole. Some measure of government control must keep us living with each other instead of on each other. How to balance power against power, how to foresee reactions, and how to control or adjust rival forces is in large part a technical matter calling for experts and leaders trained in the school of hard knocks. Religion cannot be a substitute for this worldly wisdom.

In the distribution and control of power, an unpredictable element is introduced through persons who have power *with* people. A friend of mine manages a large mill where the C.I.O. recently organized a majority of the workers. The owners of the mill were for closing out the business. The manager, on the contrary, wanted to experiment with this newly-organized power. Without pretending to have all the right on his side, he recognized that the labour leader, like himself, had a business to conduct. When each thought of the other as a mere obstacle in the way, a deadlock ensued. Soon the two men came to know each other as persons, talking over their problems man to man. That personal relation did not eliminate the organized power of the union or of the industry, but it made all the difference in gaining constructive results without violence.

Such relations are harder, no doubt, where leaders from outside interfere with local good feeling. A certain western city met this difficulty in this same personal way. In the face of common disaster through perpetual labour trouble, a council was formed representing all the unions and industries in the town, with the one object of keeping the city at work. An executive secretary was hired on a moderate salary—a man who did not pretend that either side of a struggle monopolized all points of view, and who by sheer integrity was able to win trust. He brought leaders of rival groups together as persons, laid all cards on the table, and

helped all parties work their way through to mutual conclusions without violence. In one year that strike-bound city was transformed into a city of comparative peace.

No solution is ever permanent, no method brings a Utopia, but this power with people, creating a personal relation where before men had treated each other as objects of fear, is the only antidote to violence. It may not always work. It never works perfectly. But without it we are all lost in interminable strife.

Why does the battle for power never cease?

Wherever a change is needed for the better, neither a moral ideal nor mere talk, nor individuals "morally re-armed," are sufficient. Some organized power must take the business in hand. And no organization of any size can be made up of saints. Some power over the unworthy members and over opponents must be vested in a leader, and, since there are always contestants for power, more power will be needed to hold down opposition and resist change. Stagnation and corruption come with success. It has always been so. Our life proceeds, not by a steady rise, but through repeated crises. Oppressive power over people becomes centered in some group, thus causing the oppressed to fight for a share in the power that controls their destiny.

The problem of power requires eternal vigilance. There appeared in a news letter from England this om-

inous quotation from the speech of an English general: "This world in which we live is not a milk and bun shop—or a glorified kindergarten. It is a thieves' den, in which the violent survive and the submissive succumb. In it two things predominate—you grab or you are grabbed. I prefer to be a grabber rather than a *grabbee*. Grab, grabbing, grabbed—in these three words are condensed ninety per cent of world history, and in war the remaining ten per cent doesn't count." That type of mind is everywhere among us, waiting only for a desperate situation to come to the fore. Some of us are too sheltered to appreciate its fierceness. We are not personally dealing with ruthless political machines, with the bullying policy of modern collective action, whether it be from financial manipulators and lobbying monopolies, or from the newer power of organized labour.

We are in the best position to deal with human power when we recognize its different forms and their changing relations to each other. There is most hope when we trust in continuous experiment instead of a final blanket plan. In America now we have at least five experiments with power in actual operation: individuals in free competition checking each other, consumers' and producers' cooperatives, national ownership, and government control of private enterprise. Our future depends on a constant supply of those people who never expect everything to be all right, and

who are justified because their final confidence is not in man, but in God, who enters into all our relations to correct and reclaim.

5. POWER AND FREEDOM

The problem of power is everywhere today entangled with the problem of freedom in the secular business of earning our bread. "Power with freedom" is the knottiest issue of them all, and yet our future is wrapped up in that formula. Evidently it over-simplifies the matter to think that the "American dream" is to preserve the freedom of one hundred and forty million persons to follow their own desires. To keep the lid on such a madhouse would require a "Leviathan" state that would rival Hitler's tyranny.

If freedom is a necessity for human growth how can it be evil?

We need the insight from our religious faith to comprehend the meaning of freedom, which is not simple. Being made in the image of the creative God, each of us begins with a will of his own. We are bound to find out what we can do with this will. We cannot eliminate it, as we learn when we try to make our children do our will instead of their own. If we seek to break

another's will, we destroy all creative originality. If we suppress it, we only prepare for a revolt and an explosion.

This will of our own is the secret of all discovery. It drives us beyond what is accepted as reasonable, to find out what merely reasonable people would never discover. When I was a boy we used to play a game on ice called "tickley bender." We would skate out on thin ice until it began to wave under us, just to see how far we could go before we fell in. That same spirit of adventure took men like Columbus and Magellan beyond the limits of reasonable navigation to find America and the Straits inside Cape Horn.

On the other hand, self-will is a constant source of disaster. So often wilfulness does not see where to stop until it is too late. One summer two of us, long ago, attempted to teach a calf to work in a yoke. We could get motion either by twisting his tail or by tempting him from ahead with a green apple. The more apples, the less twisting. Our elders warned us about the apples, but we were wilful. And we would have shown them something had not the calf died from eating too many green apples. We did not know how many green apples a calf could take.

Wilfulness and ignorance make it unsafe to follow this will of our own. Blindly pursuing our wilful desires, we split our personality. We look at our worst self, interfering with our best self, and say: "You little

devil, you are myself. And yet you are not all of myself. If you were, I would have to confess that 'I myself am hell.' And if we pool our self-wills in a group to obtain what we want, we split the world into warring camps which try to defeat each other.

Can we be both free and determined?

Some way must be found for controlling our freedom, to avoid evil. The Nazis would have stopped evil by compelling people to behave according to plan. But this destroys freedom and produces the worst of all evils—tyranny.

The only alternative to complete tyranny is to have our freedom determined by an interest which requires no compulsion. For whether we like it or not we are always determined by something. I once was pursued by a bull across a wide pasture. The force of circumstances so determined me that I covered the ground in record time and cleared a stone wall with sky under me as I could never have done in a time of peace.

On the Princeton campus I often see students racing to reach their first classes in the morning. It is not zeal for knowledge that produces that speed; but something like a bull in the Dean's office. However, no dean on earth could compel those students to get an education. They need a professor who can surprise them with something they did not know before. They may thus be interested in a subject which determines the way they

study from then on; and sometimes they are so determined by it that they give the rest of their lives in its service.

Samuel Johnson once said: "Scarcely any man persists in a course of life planned by choice, but as he is restrained from deviation by some external power." We do not rise to virtue on the unassisted wings of our pure aspirations. The pressure of circumstance, the fear of consequence, and the claim of people upon us, supplement our aspirations.

The older we grow the more sure we are that our self-will needs to be involved in relationships that will not let us do as we please. Somewhere between the ages of thirty and forty we learn what we stand for as other people oppose or support our position. We are thus placed in observable relations with other lives. And as we watch the older members of society dropping out, leaving places for us to fill, we realize that our life is not the plaything of self-will, but a charge given us to keep and to understand. We are not quite our own any more—and we like it. We welcome the pressure from without to reshape us. To be an utterly willing person, ready to be made over for new opportunity—that is the way to discover our destiny. Our self-will is only fulfilled when it is determined by the infinite will of God, who is the source of all truth there is to know, and of all good there is to explore, and in whose service is perfect freedom.

6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS

While our democracy aims at the full development of every man's worth, we are involved in an industrial enterprise which becomes more and more anti-individual. As its scale of operation grows bigger, its attention to individuals grows less. It reduces human relations, all too often, to what can be paid for, and entices men to do things in collective action that they would not do as single individuals.

In times of economic stress officials of a corporation may issue an order throwing thousands out of work, yet their private conscience is better than their deed. When workmen strike to exert pressure for their interests, they may interfere with millions of lives and do together what each by himself would not think of doing to a neighbour. All of us depend on production at the lowest prices, accepting for unknown workers unworthy conditions of living that we would not approve for our friends or for ourselves. When we act by the million or through a corporation our sense of personal responsibility loses its edge.

Why is our civilization contradicting our best individual intentions?

We often wonder why our hopes and ideals point in

one direction, while the course of events moves in another. We feel like a person who thinks he is taking a train to Boston from New York, and finds himself on a train bound for Washington. For thirty years we have been occupying ourselves with two world wars which no one of us wanted.

This contradiction is caused by our acceptance of a commercial nationalism which implicates us all in what we do not mean to do. Unfortunately we exalt this nationalism in our country as the democratic American Way, and as the Christian Way. It is an artificial construction which relates all kinds and classes of people in "machine mass production" for a better living on a grand scale. It is successful beyond our wildest dreams, and yields untold blessings to our race.

It enlists every sort of skill to create more and more things. It seeks salvation by production. To stimulate consumption of things produced, scientific advertising is employed to make us discontent with what we have. For long the philosophy of *laissez-faire* encouraged us to feel that if everybody were free to secure what he wanted, everybody would be satisfied. Freedom is claimed for impersonal corporations which have no human emotions and no *personal* responsibility. A huge corporation cannot act like a human being and this is not the fault of its managers.

In order to run the amazing machine the scientists bring power from nature; and still more power to run

our war machine. Finally they lay their hands on the power that holds the universe together, and release it to blow everything to pieces. The behaviour of man is now reaching its lowest level of ingenious, wholesale devastation, while the level of individual intelligence and good will has never been so high.

There is no possibility of forsaking our machines and going back to simpler times. Our one chance is to find ways of counteracting the dangers of impersonal bigness.

Can nationalism take the place of patriotism and religion?

Nationalism is the prevailing religion of the machine age. It is likewise the chief foe of a true love of country and of the Christian view of life. The founder of our faith, who began his ministry with individuals, spent the last week of his life in a death struggle with the nationalism that prevailed in his day. His people were all caught in a national way of life which was exalted by its leaders as the will of God Almighty. A secular, commercial spirit had crept into it by way of the ruling class of priests, scribes and pharisees, until the life of the whole nation was corrupted and debased. It was like a whited sepulchre, outwardly impressive but, within, "full of dead men's bones."

In a somewhat different fashion today we have

erected an industrial system as our national way of life, while our religion and our patriotism linger on like harmless old retainers.

Historians point out that modern nationalism is not a natural extension of our love of home and dooryard, out to the community, and then to the whole land, the whole people. Most of us do not love the whole land or all the people. New Englanders love their kind and their rugged country; they do not necessarily love Florida and all the people who go south. Whatever love of country is, it can exist without making us want to fight others for loving their country. But nationalism is a commercialized thing from top to bottom, claiming absolute sovereignty; so that each country becomes its own God, and makes its own moral standard according to its interest. No world order can ever be built on this commercial foundation of economic sovereignties.

Our confusion today comes from an indiscriminate mixing of nationalism, patriotism, democracy, and religion. We call this unexamined conglomeration the American Way, and whitewash it in the history textbooks of our public schools. Now, as after the First World War, we are preparing to teach more American history in the schools; while reducing to a minimum the study of the rest of the world. There is every advantage in knowing our country better, but the kind of history currently taught our children tends to exalt everything

American, and leaves the impression there is nothing wrong with our system of life. A cocky, ignorant, prejudiced Americanism is spread among us, making it harder for us to appreciate other people of the world and increasing their prejudice against us.

One of our best historians illustrates the danger of this trend by quoting the following excerpt from a law for New York Schools in 1939: "The textbook must contain no statement in derogation or in disparagement of the achievements of American heroes. It must not question the sincerity of the aims and purposes of the founders of the republic, or *of those who have guided its destinies.*" It is sheer tragedy to have such blind self-exaltation coming to the fore in our country, as though this were a time to minimize our understanding of others and induce American youth, like fascists, to believe that we are good enough to show the world how to live. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted."

How can we counteract the danger of big business and the power of the state?

We have already remarked that the kind of life for which we were created can capture our imagination before we reason about it or put it into words. This capturing process can take place only where we create

a situation in which individuals are naturally moved to act as members one of the other. No amount of talk, no sentimental love of our fellows, no argument, can move people, without some visible action in concrete circumstances.

In a certain town in the South the authorities introduced a restaurant in a public school for the benefit of undernourished children. The children continued to patronize the old "coke bar" where they bought candy and soft beverages; and no persuasion could change their minds. A wise superintendent thereupon created a new situation that would appeal to young imaginations. At the head of the stairs he placed two cages, with a rat in each, labeling them with signs that showed one rat was to be fed from the restaurant and one from the "coke bar." The former grew fat and comfortable, the latter gradually sickened and died. All the children transferred to the restaurant.

This capturing method has always been relied upon in the family, which is the smallest social unit for developing free and responsible individuals who act as members one of another. Once a father could not stop his two boys quarreling over a cart. In a desperate moment he told one boy he could have the cart for a week if, at the same time, he would do the daily work of filling the woodbox. The other boy soon tired of being idle and alone, so he lent a hand at the woodbox,

which led naturally to a sharing of the cart. The father created a situation in which the boys could have joint control of their mutual happiness.

Responsible individuals can only be developed in a community small enough for them to share responsibility. They must feel related to the common good in which the good of each individual is fulfilled and protected.

In a recent magazine article the head of a great corporation showed how this same method could be applied to oversized business. The bigness of a corporation, he believed, had certain advantages to be conserved, but bigness tended always to impersonal relations and irresponsibility. People who were not cared about did not care. When human relations were reduced to what could be paid for, the loss of personal interest became a fatal loss. To correct the trend this man's corporation was being divided into units the size of a small business, with one manager over some two hundred workers. The manager in such a small community could know everybody, and all the men could know each of their fellows. All could see their effect on each other, and each could be appreciated for his personal worth. The difference between a good man and a shirker became apparent. The whole body of employees could develop a sense of responsibility for each other and for the whole enterprise on which their

existence depended. The result was better relations, better men, and better work done.

We have elsewhere described, on a city-wide scale, how industrial peace was brought about when many large corporations were deadlocked in continuous struggle with national unions interfering in local labor troubles. Representatives of local unions, corporation officials, and citizens, with an executive secretary, formed a personal group small enough for personal contact and exchange of views. The national scale of the conflict was reduced to a personal scale, where all parties could join their interests in the larger interest of the city for the good of all its inhabitants.

The experiment in democracy in the Tennessee Valley is another example on a regional scale. Whether private enterprise could produce more and cheaper electrical power for the people is a question for experts, but it is not the main question. The people of this whole region are being united in the feeling that their own security is wrapped up in the development of their whole valley, with expert advice from the government. Their welfare is in their own hands. They first wanted the federal government to give them a start and then to leave them on their own responsibility. This dramatic winning of individuals into a new experience of belonging together in a common struggle is the American Way of pioneer days brought into a machine age. It is

capturing the imagination of millions of visitors from all over the world. It is far from perfect, but it affords a free way for mistakes to be corrected eventually, and gives the people confidence that the sources of their living are in their own control.

Can we have democratic training in politics and not in industry?

Irresponsibility in the working world is becoming a disease. It is not due entirely to weakness of character, but in part to the conditions under which work is done in large-scale industry.

In private enterprise, which has not outgrown the feelings of community between workers and employees, it is possible with collective bargaining to create a condition of security, mutual confidence and shared responsibility. Reliance on a central government can here be reduced to the minimum, with general laws to uphold a standard below which none can fall. Our one protection against a too powerful state is in the self-governing organizations and communities and sections in which the people are masters of their own lives.

When multitudes of men, in nation-wide industries, find that the power which controls their chance to work is remote and out of their reach, they become restive and suspicious. They realize that their political vote cannot correct abuses of power except in extreme cases of monopoly. Naturally they mass together in national

unions to match the power that holds the machines they must use. Owners of the machines also become interrelated in self-defense. The public becomes the victim of the struggle between the power groups. Under such circumstances contending groups, looking after their own interest, are not good judges of the public, long-range good.

The only answer to such conflicts of power lies in the direction of some higher control than either side alone can furnish. Both sides must somehow unite in creating that control in which all participate for the benefit of all. Russia is seeking "freedom to work" by government ownership that guarantees a place for all in the national enterprise. People are trained in small units to feel a responsibility for the whole country, under a government professedly dedicated to the welfare of the people. Danger arises when somebody must decide what is good for the entire population. Dictators who assume this responsibility are likely to fall in love with their own opinion of what is best for everybody. They insist on one source of news, one party, with one "line" of thought prescribed for the masses who, deprived of full information, are in no position to judge. Secret police become omnipresent, and concentration camps are filled with those who question the regime. *Freedom to work* without *political freedom* opens the way for Nazi tactics. Official effort is directed at confusing the minds of the half-educated, by contradictory

policies, conflicting statements, and deliberate lies. Once intelligence is thus reduced to helplessness, blind emotions can be induced by propaganda and vast demonstrations until a whole people are made subject to absolute power.

In other countries, like our own, political freedom, which came first, is still predominant, while freedom to work is lagging behind. England is experimenting with a labour government, which controls certain industries essential to the whole country. A new situation is created in which people feel they belong to the concern which is the source of their living. But freedom to criticize the government and change its leaders is jealously maintained. This adventure in political and industrial democracy combined is widening its appeal all over the world. In America we are still divided in judgment as to the best way to combine freedom to work and freedom to vote.

We can live together with our differing methods only as we understand each other's faults and virtues. *Training human beings to fulfill their individual lives in community is the final end for which business and the state exist.* That goal must be kept in sight.

Can national sovereignty be our highest loyalty?

The wisdom of the ages concerning the development of individuals in community is summarized in the familiar words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . .

and thy neighbor as thyself." Modern wisdom would have us attend directly to the business of doing good to our neighbors. Why go out of the way—two sides of a triangle—to love God first and then come around to the neighbors? The older wisdom is more sound because it allows for our habit of falling in love, not with our neighbor, but with our idea of what is right for him. Extreme conservatives who hold up needed change, wish to do good to everybody, but they want to keep the doing of it in their own hands. They would avoid any risk of others helping themselves in their own way. Extreme radicals are subject to the same temptations—they become obsessed with their own ideas of what the world needs and would extinguish their opponents.

God alone knows all the good that is possible for all of us. Our first loyalty must be to what is beyond our reach if we would find what we might reach together.

Today it is evident that national sovereignty has not power enough to save itself. Under God, no nation can complete itself. We are being driven toward a sovereignty higher than any nation. We reach toward a limited world government, not to weaken national power, but to acquire new power in which we are all united for the sake of the whole world. But no talk of a world state should divert us from participating now in the practical steps which train us in mutual aid, understanding, and exchange of news. National repre-

sentatives from all parts of the world must meet in a small body, where all national affairs can be brought under the full light of world opinion. If we assume that we can create out of nothing a world authority to present us with what we need, we are like an old dog of mine who tries to catch a squirrel by simply barking up the tree, forgetting the old adage that the way to catch that squirrel is "to climb the tree and make a noise like a nut." If we all practice some real climbing now, helping each other gain the security we need, we might have our squirrel sooner than any of us dare to dream. Now is the day of salvation.

Part V

OUR HABIT OF SELF-
DEFEAT

1.—EGOISM

Everybody knows the bitterness of frustration, especially after we have been passing through several decades of self-defeat. Multitudes of neurotic individuals are made miserable by getting in their own way. In a world war we reached the climax of frustration when we sought to save ourselves by destroying each other. A European writer has described this paradoxical situation as "Man Against Himself."

The whole question of liberation from self-defeat is presented to us in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The word, "trespass" means a violation of a known law. To our minds the familiar sign, "No trespassing," warns against stepping into premises where we do not belong. The most common trespass is to put self in first place where it never belongs—it is always a trespasser there.

A friend once said to the Russian novelist Turgenev: "The important thing is to put something ahead of self." And Turgenev replied: "The most important thing is to know what to put before self." Whenever self is put in first place, we get in our own way and defeat ourselves.

Why does the word "sin" seem out of date?

The old-fashioned word sin has drifted out of our vocabulary because of its low associations. It sounds a bit morbid when applied to such respectable citizens as most of us are—in public. The word "egoism" is our best equivalent for "sin" because it is acceptable in almost any society. It covers all the sly ways of putting self first where it does not belong.

Egoism accounts for a long list of human woes—neurotic misery, moral tragedy, private heart-aches, broken homes and friendships, public corruption and international anarchy. The word sounds better than "sin," but it describes the same offences.

What does forgiveness have to do with egoism?

In our religion forgiveness is the whole process of shattering our illusions about ourselves, and reconciling us to the will of God which is higher, wiser, and more inclusive than our fragment of a self.

We may here recall the design for living given in the first part of the Lord's Prayer. It is a triangular design, with God and at least two persons, designated by the pronouns "ours" and "us." God our Creator is in the highest place, because he preceded us. "We were thought about before we began to think for ourselves." Each of us is only a finite, incomplete, and imperfect part of the whole. And none of us can be complete

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without our neighbors, who, like ourselves, are subject to our common Creator.

Ideologies may come and go, but this design is the structural framework of human life. The Creator is always superior to all his creatures. He has his own purposes and he seeks to use us to help create each others' lives. In such a setting, putting oneself first is sin against creation, no matter how respectable a self it may be. The more respectable and intelligent, the more dangerous the sinner.

Do people need forgiveness when they are behaving themselves?

Well-behaved people may be the very worst egoists. Decent people can be so self-centered that they judge everything that happens from the point of view of their own interest—as though they, instead of God, were the center of the universe. The Lord's Prayer employs the pronoun "us" as though we all had the same affliction and could not rightly look down our noses at each other.

We forget the egoism we all share because some of our particular shortcomings seem less offensive than the faults of others whom we could mention. "Thank God I am not as other men." We may not steal a neighbor's goods for fear of going to jail; but we can rob him of his good name by a slanderous tale, and go scot free.

There are a host of things we never do that others do. We are not as drunk and sensual and careless as others. We are more correct, but we may be loveless, and hard as nails where our financial interests are concerned. We Americans never start wars. After the First World War, we just looked out for ourselves and neglected everything that might have prevented the anarchy from which the Nazi tyranny arose. Once that tyranny was on the loose we had to resist evils which became more dangerous than our kind of sin.

Why has pride been called the root of all sin?

All our misbehaviour can be traced to some presumption in favor of our side. John Calvin and his followers in Geneva wanted to regulate community behaviour by rules defining God's will in daily life. The guardians of the law soon set their human judgment in first place, equal to God, and judged everybody by their own measure until they developed a legalism and a censorship under which it was a burden to live. So our Puritan forefathers often "thought themselves righteous and despised others." The "Inquisition" in Catholic countries of Europe was the most hideous example of human judges putting themselves and the Church in the judgment seat of the Almighty.

It is well to recall here the old adage that when one points a critical fore-finger at another, there are three fingers pointing back at himself. William Blake, in

attacking this sin of egoism, insisted that the essence of Christianity is not morality, which leads people to set themselves up to judge others by themselves. Christianity is forgiveness of sins. "Mutual forgiveness never caused a war."

2. FORGIVENESS—HUMAN AND DIVINE

It is very common for us to think of forgiveness simply as a human affair between ourselves. Let us forgive each other, and call it enough.

Why ask God to forgive us?

The power on earth to forgive sins, to shatter the illusion of the ego and reconcile us to the truth of things, is something more than human talk. Much of our forgiveness is a mere matter of talk, but the forgiveness that begets real disillusionment, shame, receptiveness and recovery, is not the product of words.

The glib talk of preachers, proclaiming that God forgives our sins and that we need only believe to be saved, can often become a travesty of a great truth. The results of this easily proclaimed gospel are not always impressive. According to the Old and New Testaments the power to disillusion human egos and bring them to their senses, not only costs more than talk, but requires more than we can do.

For instance, it is not in our power to bring on the

consequences that shatter self-illusion. We are mostly blind to the worst consequences, while occupied with the desires of the moment.

After two infant grandchildren have been left alone in my living room for an hour, it is a sight to behold. Their egos are stored with energy that has to expend itself on something. Thinking first of their private amusement, they pull books out of the shelves, clear off tables, dismember toys, and try to drink the ink. When they are through, the room might be described in the words which Jesus spoke over Jerusalem: "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Children in such circumstances never see the desolation coming. They are too busy minding their own business.

The serious consequences of our living come upon all of us when we are not looking. These consequences are not in our hands. They work out naturally through the whole established constitution of things.

Our self-indulgence is so tough that only some shock can disillusion it. Even reason is not enough, when we are mature, to restrain our self-deceiving ego. We shall see later that reason may even be enlisted to defend and excuse our selfish wishes. Only some disturbance from outside shatters our complacency and makes us amenable to change. The hidden God works through everything that happens in this process of disillusionment—which is always more than we can predict or detect.

Why isn't our sin our own affair?

It is often said in self-defense that our life is our own business. We will forgive ourselves and take the consequences. We do take the consequences, indeed, but we cannot take them *back*. Once one of my children was a long time silent in her room upstairs. Warned by her silence, her mother hurried up to find her trying in vain to force back into its tube a long worm of tooth-paste which she had just squeezed out.

The evil results of our behaviour cannot be taken back. We leave bad pieces of ourselves all over the place. Who can take back the consequences of a careless preparation for some fine opportunity? Who can recover the cost of our blindness after the First World War? Who can recall the pain he has caused to those he loved? Who can trace the outcome of his selfish ways?

A great English scientist, who had been an atheist, was brought back to religion by the appalling devastation of evil in the world. To think that our weak human characters are sufficient to handle that problem seemed to him sheer nonsense. The burden laid on this world by human selfishness is beyond our capacity to carry. The consequences are always too many for us to take back.

What can God do with evil consequences?

The problem of forgiveness is not simple, even for God. He cannot say, "Forget it—I'll let you off easy this time if you promise not to do it again."

The understanding given us in the Bible is the best we have on this matter. It might be stated thus: God cannot *take back* the consequences of our acts, because he cannot retract the laws established in the very nature of things. When we go against laws of life, we bring the inevitable results upon ourselves. God does not have to put himself out, as Augustine once said, to bring us what we have coming to us. God cannot *take off* the consequences and put them on another. Sometimes men have interpreted the gospel as though Christ relieved us of our burden, as one might take another's load to carry it for him. Our consequences are inseparably attached to us. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Since God cannot take back the consequences, or take them off, *he takes them with us*, as if to say, "We will face this mess together to create a new consequence from the evil one."

There is nothing easy-going about this doctrine, because the new consequence cannot be created until *after* we have suffered the bad results of our deeds, and spread suffering where it was not deserved.

A few kind words of forgiveness cannot create another consequence from the results we have brought

upon ourselves. That is an operation which demands more than our ability. All life is a record of our being shaped by a course of events beyond our control. We can exercise freedom of choice *up to a point*, like a man freely deciding to jump into deep water before he has learned to swim. From there on circumstances take over the control and create a new problem to face.

A great Danish thinker has said that "we understand life backwards, but must live it forwards." In a backward look we see that our own lives have been a series of partial successes and remade failures. We had to cooperate, but whenever we were made humble and contrite and obedient, our life was reshaped in unforeseen ways. Some of our bitterest experience was used in our education, often completely contrary to our expectation and desire.

Is there providence at work in the course of events?

In the larger scene of human history we know that the course of events has a profound effect on what a nation or group of nations can do at any time. That strange compound of what we have all been doing for a century back, exercising our freedom, catches up with us. An accumulation of results creates some critical occasion which brings us to book, shatters our self-sufficiency, and sets the stage on which we must act.

No human description can explain the way our Creator works upon us and with us. He is not confined to

"church work," nor to any design of personal salvation which man has formulated in his creeds. God has the whole scheme of things in his hands. He uses the whole of it, and all of us together, all of the time. Just as a scientist deals with nature, confident that the universal forces are always at work, so the religious man is assured that in the field of human society the renewing powers are always working with the consequences of our lives toward a fuller meaning.

From this point of view it is easier to recognize that before we start a reform, our own minds have been put through a change; before we do anything, much has been done to us; before we attain any ideals, we find those ideals constantly modified and brought into line with new possibilities that have been hidden from our sight.

It is historic fact that the true nature of forgiving love could be revealed to us best in one who was crucified by the typical sins of the world. And it is also a fact that through Christ, and those who preceded him and those who have since been affected by his revelation, we have gained our richest experience of the recovering power of the divine love that "bears the sins" of men.

From the humble Galilean a great movement of regenerating force flowed into history and has continued there. We need its help before as well as after

retribution has caught up with us. For God is not like the old World Court, waiting in the background until offenders have gotten so deeply into trouble that there is no safe way out. All of us need correcting and saving all the time. We never are completely right, even when we think so. Open and acknowledged wickedness is not the only problem. Our satisfied rightness is where the real trouble is brewing, for we overlook its inadequacy until events reveal our shortcomings. Our "virtues" need watching!

Some enterprising business men have done what they called a good job developing the resources of the country, while leaving a waste of exploited and eroded land behind, for which generations have had to suffer. That is a sample of how "good business," according to the standard of a certain time, turns out to be a social disaster. Our human race needs watching continuously, for we are always forgiving our own goodness too soon. Fortunately we are in the hands of a faithful Creator who knows what reality is, and who acts as our judge and redeemer, *all the time*.

Where is forgiving power most naturally brought home to us? *

Most of us first met the power of forgiveness in our homes, not as a doctrine, but as a personal force. Unfortunately there are many homes where this movement

of forgiving power has little chance, because husband and wife each put self first. The husband furnishes the money and assumes, therefore, that his wife and children should cater to his whims. His wife becomes tired of worshipping his ego, and rebels against family duties that interfere with her right to her own life. The children are hurt and confused by this contest of wills, and tend each to go his own way, secretly if need be. Such homes are breaking up at a menacing rate, leaving children a prey to inner conflicts that may be their undoing. Human lives brought up in homes where the struggle for existence has been too crude and harsh for forgiving love to show itself, may develop sub-human traits more menacing than beasts.

Fortunately there are other homes that carry down the living tradition of love from one generation to another. The members of such families have been disillusioned, at least in part, with the policy of putting self first. The old ego is still in their midst, hard to endure at times, treading on toes and causing needless pain. But these homes do not break up. Both parents and children are made ashamed when they hurt each other. Instead of separating they give in, not to each other's ego, but to another spirit *which comes in as self goes out of first place*. Thus they are continually reconciled to the love that binds them together, for which they care more than for all their private desires put together.

Reflections upon the mystery of this transformation of our egos has given rise to the profound doctrines of the atonement; but no *doctrine* ever saved anyone from himself. We are made receptive to a new spirit only through human contacts where we are met by the eternal love which neither takes back consequences, nor takes them off, but takes them with us. Workers in the old Bowery mission used to say that unless a poor outcast had somewhere known the love of a kind mother or her substitute, he was hard to redeem by any gospel of salvation. Looking back through lives that have helped redeem us from ourselves, we finally recognize the inexplicable force of one personality who was their fountain head. Only where that same force, which was in him, has come to us alive through others, can we experience for ourselves the timeless words of St. Paul: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

Before discussing more fully the convertibility of human nature, we must consider the practical difficulties of this forgiving love in a world where selfishness has organized its dominion.

3.—FORGIVENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

We have talked so much about loving and forgiving one another, while we were exploiting each other in

making a living, that the word "love" has acquired an unreal reputation. We have proved the utter futility of saying: "If all men loved and forgave each other, our problems would be solved." That statement offers no strategy for the large sections of daily life where people are very far from loving each other.

Certainly the business world on which we all depend for our existence does not suggest the idea of "love" to our minds. It rather suggests the foxhole where men take advantage of the other fellow before he takes advantage of them. International affairs simply enlarge the foxholes. The prime source of moral confusion to-day lies in the fact that we talk one way while we have to act another as we struggle to survive.

What can forgiving love do in a loveless world?

This divided manner of life cannot be changed by bigger and better exhortations to love. Mere talk of ideals only increases the confusion and the futility. We need to realize afresh that love is not confined to personal affection. That is its highest but not its only expression. There are areas where personal affection cannot enter because the intimacy it requires is not possible.

Groups cannot love other groups with personal affection. We cannot love people, in this personal sense, when we do not know them, for affection does not operate generally. We depend on multitudes whom we

never see, and our personal affection stands nearly helpless in such situations.

The late Archbishop of Canterbury wrote an important pamphlet to show that love can operate in the strategy of understanding before it can become personal affection. He bases this way of understanding on the triangular pattern of life of which we have already spoken. God the Creator alone knows the worth of my life. I do not know it, the state cannot know it. I am responsible to God alone for my worth. As Browning said, "All men ignored in me . . . that I was worth to God." Furthermore, I am created to be incomplete without a relation to my neighbor. I need others to teach me, to be customers for my business, and to conduct another business which supplies what I cannot make for myself. The pronoun "I" is always included in the pronoun "we." No one can complete his own life. But my neighbor has his unique worth known only to God. I do not know it, the state cannot know it. And my neighbor is responsible only to God for his worth. So, I have no right to use my neighbor as a convenience for my purposes, and ignore his worth to God.

Always this triangular view is the truth about life: self related to God, self related to neighbor, neighbor related to God. Long before we are close enough to love each other personally we can use this formula as a strategy for understanding each other.

What is the alternative to domination?

Trying to understand another man's worth, and to develop his worthiness for the good of all, is the only way to reduce the need for domination.

Before we do anything that affects our neighbors, we should give them a chance to advance their claim to be understood. And before our neighbors do anything that affects our welfare, they should recognize our claim to a hearing. Groups can act by this policy when personal acquaintance is not yet possible. This is the essence of democracy as opposed to all forms of tyranny. The appalling selfishness of Americans would ruin our country and require a dictator to save us from chaos, but for the simple fact that we still practice this way of listening to each other. If that ceases, we will become the victims of some fanatical power. The opposite of forgiveness is totalitarianism which would create unity by extinction of all who differ.

4.—THE STRATEGY OF PERSONAL INFLUENCE

In the midst of the impersonal relations of modern society it is still possible for the forgiving spirit to be

channeled through the secret working of personal influence, from life to life.

When the Apostle Paul first went to Rome, he was a helpless prisoner of the Roman State. He was met outside the walls by a little company of Christians who had lived underground in the catacombs, with no power to change the tyrannical government of that time. And it is reported that when Paul saw them he thanked God, and took courage. That meeting made all those individuals aware of the inside conspiracy which sustained them while the stern Roman guard looked helplessly on.

Have we become obsessed with outward change as our salvation?

Outward changes, so necessary today, have obsessed our minds. Only general welfare can thus be achieved. General welfare is not enough—the individual requires more than general welfare.

The inside route from mind to mind is where creative ideas first enter the world and spread without limit. Influence traveling by that route may soften the effect of organization on human life, and even “cast down the mighty from their seats.”

I recall a mill worker once saying he would prefer to work for a smaller wage under a boss who had real human sympathy, than for higher pay under a tyrant.

In the worst circumstances opportunities for friendly and forgiving acts are always open. So long as inner routes between individuals are open the great human ferments can carry on toward the important turning points in history and in our private lives.

The eternal struggle for liberty, in the best sense of that word, is to guard the channels of *thought* from outside tyrannical control. Today the center of struggle is around the freedom to work, which is basic to all freedoms, but this freedom may lead on to tyranny unless there is security for the expression of a free conscience and a free mind.

A student, thinking of the ageless fight to keep our souls free, expressed his feeling in a letter home from the front: "There seems to be almost a conspiracy to convince me that I ought to make a contribution in some way, as part of a legion of battlers for lost causes whom I do not want to let down."

How can a forgiving temper mitigate the conflicts of self-interest?

In all group conflicts magnanimity has an important function in keeping the traffic going both ways between individuals who are separated by the misunderstanding of their groups. Let that traffic stop and war begins. Once as a boy I was cleaning an old horse who accidentally put down his heavy foot on my toe. He could not seem to understand how I felt. I beat him, kicked him

and went into a tantrum of rage. He still failed to understand and when he finally moved he lifted another foot and put his whole weight on my toe. He should have known that I was his friend and I should have treated him as a friend, because he helped me in my work; but when the two-way traffic of understanding stopped, it was far to the finish.

When anyone says: "I will give you a piece of my mind and take none of your back talk"—that is one-way traffic. Only when understanding starts from both ends to keep the communications open can peaceful answers be found. There are teachers who impose their ideas on pupils, and other teachers who win cooperation in a two-way traffic of thought. There are parents who give orders to their children, and do things for them to command gratitude; and others who listen and wait and watch for response coming from the other direction. So business all too often tells labour what to do, and handles workers like children who are expected to obey and not to think.

Toleration and mutuality come from the disillusionment of egoism that wants all the traffic one way. The final hope of forbearance in a tolerant society springs from a common awareness of the egoism that needs to be forgiven in all of us. The conviction that our Creator has a will for us that is not identical with the outlook of any of us, mitigates our desire to dominate each other. We might well recall the great saying of Thomas

à Kempis: "Study to be patient, bearing other men's faults;—for thou hast in thee many things that must be suffered by other men . . . For there is no man without fault, no man without a burden, no man sufficient to himself; but we must bear together, comfort together, help together, teach and admonish *together*."

How can we correct each other effectively?

Unless we feel there is something biased or limited in our way of looking at things, we cannot feel at home with others who have something to be forgiven in their outlook.

When life becomes too complicated for us to understand, we have a way of saying: "God only knows." This is the whole truth. Over all human judgments we must keep that reservation: "God only knows." That is the only antidote for the pride and self-sufficiency which blocks the way for helpful difference.

While staying one summer in the Scottish Highlands, some of us, late in the afternoon of our arrival, thought we would climb to the top of a dome-like hill on the moor back of the inn, for an all-around view of the country. After an hour we reached a big rock which we had thought was on the peak of the hill. But it was not the top at all. Twice more we chose a mark on the skyline, only to find that the summit was not there. We never reached our goal before nightfall. All we ever saw was the landscape from our side of the hill.

It is the fate of men to be limited to the outlook from the side of the hill where they live. No one lives on the top. God alone can see the whole view.

Only as we feel the need to be forgiven for our partial views can we forgive what is lacking in others, and then share our ideas. Hence comes magnanimity. Samuel Johnson once wrote: "As I know more of mankind, I expect less of them, and am ready now to call a man a good man upon easier terms than I was formerly." Such ripening of judgment grows out of a deepening realization that "we all fall short of the glory of God."

It is always fatal to try to correct another as though we were on the top of the hill and he was still down on the side. There is a famous passage from Pascal which is pertinent here: "When we wish to correct another with advantage, we must notice from what side he views the matter, for from that side he is usually true, and *admit that truth to him*. He is satisfied with that, for he sees he was not mistaken." And Pascal further reminds us that when anyone shows us a truth which we have dimly seen within ourselves, we are inclined to love him who makes us feel it, for he is pointing out not his own riches, but ours.

Lacking such a temper of mind we are tempted to demand unconditional surrender. The catastrophes which follow prove again and again that nobody sees all sides from the top of the hill. "God only knows."

5. FORGIVENESS AND OPTIMISM

The realistic picture of human existence shows our continuous imperfection, continuously forgiven. On every level of attainment we fall short, are disillusioned, and given the chance of a new construction of life.

How can we believe imperfect people?

In the human realm there is no perfection. Our hope is to believe our imperfection—and God. Hitler believed perfection could be gained by force, but he could not get it. We in America expect imperfection, and we have plenty of it. There is not anything finished and complete anywhere in the country—thank God. Everywhere everything needs to be made over and made over again. The possibilities of change and growth are infinite and no class or political party has a mortgage on on the future.

Imperfection is the door into the unknown and the untried. If we refuse to admit its presence, if we excuse it, cover it up for comfort's sake, we become complacent, and tend to fight all others who disturb what

we like as the *status quo*. Hence come the wars, little and big, that spread havoc in the earth.

On the other hand, if we admit imperfection, walk up to it like men, seeking to be shown and led on, then, as we keep knocking, the door to the unguessed is opened. So all discoveries have come to man.

There is a phrase in the Book of Revelation spoken from the eternal throne: "Behold I set before you an open door that no man can shut." We may not think about God, and try to believe that he keeps opening the door. We take him for granted like the electric eye that opens doors in the Pennsylvania Station in New York. We do not say to ourselves: "I believe in the electric eye;" we just walk up to the door, with both hands full of bags, confident that, in a split second, it will open.

This opening of doors out of imperfection gives the perpetual assurance that *God is never through*.

Are there any final solutions to the problems of life?

No creator ever wants to stop; his joy is continuous creation. In a little book called *The Mind of the Maker*, an English writer, Dorothy L. Sayers, reminds us that we moderns have overworked the idea that life is like a problem to be solved. There are many problems to which science finds answers, and there are detective stories and moving pictures which bring plots to neat

solutions. And as devotees of science, murder stories, and movies, we have acquired a habit of expecting solutions just around the corner. But around every corner are new problems, different schools of thought, new fights on our hands, and nowhere does life come to a finish.

One learns that in bringing up children. At first, when an infant, crying in the night, cannot explain what is the matter, it seems that all will be better when he can talk and fend for himself. Soon he does talk, talks back, and wanders about getting into everything. At that stage there is wishful longing for the time when he will manage his own life; but then comes adolescence when he thinks he can manage himself and tries everything once. Here there is comfort in the thought that soon he will marry and settle down, but that raises the anxious question of a right choice. Finally he does marry, and on come the grandchildren to start the whole cycle over again.

There are no final solutions. Life is never through. Always there are new materials and new relations out of which new life is created. Always it is the readiness to be remade which keeps us awake to what is coming alive in the world. In every age something outworn is dying, and something untried is being born. Under a creative God, every ending is our introduction to some beginning. It is a tragedy to be taking sides with that which is doomed to pass away.

6. FORGIVENESS AND INDEBTED LIFE

In times when the sacrifices of war were in the daily news, our indebted conscience made our ordinary life feel "like a guilty thing surprised." Only a grateful life has power in it to deliver us again and again from the cool calculations of comfort and respectable self-seeking.

What is the greatest source of indebtedness?

Paul illustrates this indebtedness by lifting the matter of gratitude above the level of human relations and tying it up with God. "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, . . . that ye may prove what is the good and perfect will of God," or as Moffatt's translation has it: "What is good and acceptable to Him and perfect."

The "mercies of God" are the surprising uses that can be made of a man before he can make himself completely right. Most religions had taught that a man could not be forgiven and accepted by God until he was right. Paul had realized that before anyone could deserve to be called right he could offer himself, just where he stood. Before he could give anything better, he could give himself, which is as near right as any of

us ever come while we are involved in the sins of the world.

All the amazing and finest things in human history have come through imperfect people thus surrendered. Dostoevsky said that the meaning of history is the winning of the *free* wills of men. That is the whole stubborn problem of humanity—to get men to give their wills. Progress is blocked not by sheer wickedness, but by the ingratitude and inertia of fairly good people who accept all the sacrifice of others and live on in their self-enclosed lives—a load for the faithful to drag along.

Is the motive of gratitude more effective than sheer will power?

This indebted life proves there is more to living than a strong will. Today a tremendous emphasis has been placed on the strong-willed man. He is the dynamic figure who gets things done—energetic, tireless, driving, brooking no interference, impatient with all that crosses his will.

There is everything to be said for a strong will, but by itself alone this strong will proves inadequate and perilous. The high-handed man does not enlist free cooperation. He is fearsome of people who organize to help themselves without his charity. He lacks sensitiveness and receptivity and so shuts himself off from what others could give him.

In the long run the aggressive, self-sufficient strong man cannot escape pride and obduracy, that leave little room for give and take. And this fierce dominance builds up opposition that calls for more domination until the overbearing power is brought down by the revolt of human nature. The will to power is not the salvation of the world.

A great surgeon said the other day: "These days we are taking whatever we can learn from anybody, being grateful for it, and giving away everything we know as fast as we can." There is real effectiveness: Life more and more indebted and utterly willing to give its best away.

The indebted life is the only inexhaustible life. That phrase of Paul, which we quoted, suggests that we are here on earth not simply to get something or get something done. We are here to "*prove*" something that is greater than ourselves, to prove what is unrealized.

No wonder that men are fascinated by science. In that field they feel indebted to all pioneers who have gone before, and give themselves to prove the immeasurable resources that are at hand but unrealized. No wonder we are awakened when someone in worse trouble than we are proves what God can do with a self-abandoned person in that situation. No wonder that human relations become the field of interest that is most alluring today. The possibilities to be proved there are limitless.

So many unexpected things have been proved to us that we can never live up to our indebtedness. But every memory of an indebted life makes us discontented with anything else. We are restless until we find rest in a grateful abandonment of self, for then we can be used to prove what the Creator has yet in store for us.

Self-abandonment—that is the final word. *Mere remembrance* of lives to whom we are indebted may end in sentimental feelings and death to the soul. No real saving is done to us until, of our own free will, we plunge into some concrete activity which, of necessity hurts our selfish life, hurts it until we do not care if it is hurt unto death.

7. THE FREEDOM OF GOD

In our Biblical faith, forgiveness is based on the principle that the Creator is free. He is free to forgive whom he will, whether we deserve it or not. His correcting and remaking are not confined to channels which we might prescribe.

What is the basic truth for which Protestantism stands?

The Protestant movement started from a truth that

is neither Protestant nor Catholic, but Biblical, *viz.* that *God is free.*

To say God is free is the opposite of saying that we human beings are free. We are free only to obey the will of the Creator or to "disobey and pay for it." After we have made our premature conclusions there is ample room left for our Creator to disturb our complacency and disclose fresh possibilities.

There is much unfortunate misunderstanding about freedom in religion. Catholics are popularly supposed to believe that the Roman Church is free to exercise the authority of God with obedient individuals, to furnish them guidance and assurance in spiritual affairs. Protestants on the contrary are supposed to hold that individuals are free to think as they please, and make up their religion to suit themselves, quite apart from the historical body of believers and the accumulated wisdom of the past. Somebody has said that this kind of religion is like an amateur sailor navigating without a chart which records the results of long experience at sea.

The Bible affirms that *neither an institution nor an individual but God alone is free.* Everything human is subject to his correction.

Any man who has this faith in the freedom of the Creator becomes a perpetual non-conformist, inside or outside of any church. That is, he stands ever ready to

protest against any form of life that pretends it will need no revision. He insists on the open door policy in all fields of human endeavor.

True scientists have always accepted this attitude. Thomas Huxley wrote to Charles Kingsley: "Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God." He insisted that one should sit down before a fact or a situation like a little child, prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses all observable facts lead. "Since I have resolved at all costs to do this, I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind." Such words are neither Protestant nor Catholic. They stem from the Biblical idea that our Creator alone is free to know the whole truth about everything.

Can we blame religion for modern "individualism" that has reduced freedom to absurdity?

We easily forget that "individualism" is a perversion of a great movement to set individuals free. In the Middle Ages the beginning of modern science and of the free business market were checked by religious bigotry and the feudal system. Individual minds and abilities needed to be released from old forms for the amazing discoveries that were ahead. Impatience with restricting authority led to an individualism which gave

private judgment and private enterprise free reign.

In the church this "individualism" appeared as a desire to escape from ecclesiastical authority in favor of Biblical authority, privately interpreted. Using the Bible as a literally dictated document, men extracted texts from all parts of it to bolster arguments for their divergent human opinions. Denominationalism and sectarianism became rampant. Purifiers and simplifiers, rejoicing in private tastes, felt free to eliminate whatever doctrines or forms seemed unessential. As time went on, religious freedom meant freedom to have no guidance save individual opinions, no ceremonies of long tried worth, no religious teaching in the home or in the schools, no prayer life, and finally no church—just private feelings out under a tree on a Sunday holiday. Thus religion degenerated in many quarters to a purely individual matter, withdrawn from public life into the privacy of everyone's soul.

Can God's work of making over people be confined to any one church?

We have already noted that human nature is created in two stages. Our original self-centered nature is meant to be transformed into a new self-giving nature. Since this change is different from self-improvement, it requires more than our will power to convert a possessive life into one that offers itself as a gift without any price. Now and then in every community we meet with these

transformed people who are willing to give more of themselves than can be paid for; who put in more than they take out. They are the salt of the earth, the leaven in the lump.

The power that does this converting is an utterly public affair. It is not a private feeling inside an individual nor is it confined to any known church. It always operates through a community, but God is free to choose what community he will use from time to time. He was evidently free to choose a particular section of history, including Hebrew prophets, Christ, the apostles and those who have been affected by them, to produce what we call the Hebrew-Christian tradition which underlies our civilization. Doubtless he chose other civilizations and traditions to bring us other contributions to the life of the spirit.

At any rate what we have derived from Biblical history and the church is no more an individual affair than the body of scientific knowledge. One might well say that the creation of the historical community beginning in the Bible was a divine movement; but whenever we confine that movement to some humanly organized church and call that church divine, we confuse the divine with the human. The power that converts human nature is in all churches, but confined to none. It requires some organized body of people, but no human company can be identified with God. The life that is a gift rather than a possession emerges not in separated

free to choose his own agents. The Reformation teaching of the "priesthood of all believers" recognizes a special order of men set apart for the work of the church, but it also declares that God is not a clergyman of any denomination whose only co-workers are its ministers and church workers. Therefore the daily task of a layman is a calling to serve God in faithfulness in the work of the secular world. Men and women creating families may be as consecrated servants of the Creator, and as important to him, as nuns and priests who at great sacrifice forego home life to represent devotion to God. It takes all kinds to make a world.

If God is free to work where he will, why should there be such sharp division between Protestants and Catholics over their respective churches?

Since both churches repeat the formula of the Lord's Prayer it is evident that they hold in common the basic understanding of human nature derived from the Bible. There is enough here to unite both branches of the church in opposition to the irreligion of the modern world. But it is highly essential that we recognize the source of tension and suspicion between the two bodies of Christians.

An intelligent Catholic believes that a hierarchy of experts in theology and church affairs knows more than a layman about what has been thought and tested over

the centuries. To start from this accumulated experience, not to accept it blindly, but to go on with one's own thinking, seems a sensible way to proceed. But Protestants who are intelligent should hold to this same position. The great thinkers guarding the heritage of the thought of ages are better equipped with knowledge of the Bible and spiritual discipline than ordinary laymen. All men should "take off" from what has been learned and expressed in doctrines that have persisted through many disagreements. The same resources are open to both Catholics and Protestants—the literature is public.

The real seat of difficulty lies in the fact that the Catholic hierarchy is a self-perpetuating body, exercising an authority in which laymen have no part and no vote. So long as the authority is confined to "spiritual matters" the laymen, as we have noted, might naturally welcome authoritative guidance; although a Protestant can never understand how a group of limited human beings can be conveyors of infallible truth not available to intelligent human beings among the laity. But history has shown that ecclesiastical hierarchies are again and again mixing in political affairs. Right-minded Catholics resent this interference. The fact that laymen cannot find out beforehand what is being planned in the secret counsels of the clergy is the chief danger. No official group of clergy in any Protestant church can make

political plans or manipulate political influence without the consent of laymen who share authority with the clergy.

There is little personal suspicion among us toward Catholic laymen or toward particular priests as individuals. There is no reason why a truly spiritual clergy should ever be suspected of political dealings. *But it is important for all to recognize that wherever there is organized authority which can operate secretly, there is bound to be suspicion. Possession of secret power by human beings in any governing body is always suspected.* For secret power, age after age, has tended toward political scheming and corruption. The record is plain for all to see in the long record of human fallibility. Catholic teaching definitely states that when a country becomes Catholic, the state should uphold the church—which does not mean that political power can force people to believe according to law. But corrupt authorities can always abolish the public teaching of disapproved faith, and put every obstacle in the way of religious freedom. There once was an Inquisition in a so-called Catholic State. So long as any human authority can operate secretly with political power, eternal vigilance will be necessary to guard the truth that God is free.

The obvious fact of danger is nothing to be bitter about. We should all, Catholics and Protestants alike, meet the danger with firm faith that God can choose

his own agents outside secret bodies who might be influenced by their own purposes. The church is always healthiest in a country where Protestant and Catholic laymen are more nearly equal in numbers and are mixing freely in responsibility for the concerns of the nation as a whole.

Outside of church affairs, God is free to choose the most surprising helpers to make us see ourselves as others see us. We cannot detect our own sins as plainly as we can the sins of others. God has to use our rebellious children to make us recognize our own desire to have our own way. He requires all the people who bother us to make us realize how our peculiarities bother others. He had to use organized labor to counteract the unfortunate conduct of robber barons and tycoons. Now it may take an aroused public to make labour leaders see how often they are acting like others who were irresponsible toward the public.

And today, no doubt, God is using a nation like Russia to remind us that idealistic talk is not realistic policy. While we feel safe as the one country in the United Nations least likely to have the rest unite against us, we are forced to be realistic by the nation who has most fear that the union of states might be a combination against it. We Americans are the most naive, complacent, self-satisfied nation of talkers in the world, whose easy security for years has made us careless and indifferent. We need to believe that in those whom we

fear most, God is giving us the gift to see ourselves as others see us. What will be necessary to make the Russian people behind the "iron curtain" see their nation's policies as others see them, God only knows. Certainly nothing short of the united council of all peoples for open discussion of our affairs can give us hope.

Part VI

OUR CONTINUOUS CONVERSION

1. OUR HUMAN PREDICAMENT

For a long time now we have been confused by the modern idea of the perfectibility of man. We tried to believe that the world was moving away from evil. That alone could be progress, moving away from evil. But are we leaving evil behind? Do we feel like a moral success?

When we look at ourselves and ask if we are good or bad, we know the answer. What is good in us is made in the fight with what is bad in us. What is good in the world is created and preserved in this same battle with the opposition. *Character is nowhere made by escaping from evil, but in the contest with it.* The meaning of unselfishness is not that we have lost our ego, but that we, now and then to a certain degree, permit something better to gain that first place where our ego still wants to be. The battle over first place is continuous. Such is the understanding suggested in the last petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—continuously.

Have we been over-estimating the goodness of men?

There has been a screw loose in our optimism. Evolutionists argued for some automatic progress that was

lifting us, as on an elevator, from the cellar to the attic. But after twenty centuries of Christianity we are back in the cellar again in the bloodiest century of all time.

From education we derived the impression that as we became better informed all around, we would gradually be out of the woods. But all that education furnished us has been made to serve the universal destruction of war.

Science was hoping to save the world by the control of nature, but, as a great scientist has said, since man has gotten control of nature man himself has been harder to control.

Revolutionists promised that some Utopia of satisfaction was around the next bend in the road, but always some new hell turned up as we turned the corner. It is as plain as a pike-staff that the most evil days of history have come on us at the highest level of culture. Somewhere along the line we have been fooling ourselves.

Is it true that our ideals never work out?

A very wise scholar, who had studied all the philosophies and religions of the world, concluded that we human beings are always incompetent but responsible. We cannot be perfect, and we cannot be excused for our imperfections. The universe like the law courts cannot let us off when we are ignorant or defiant of its laws.

Nobody can possibly be all right. This is the thorn in the flesh of humanity. We hate to admit it. Our optimistic modern world has tried to ignore it. All our troubles, and all our tyrannies and all our wars originate where we make the assumption that our way of life is the whole truth. We may be partly right, but neither we nor anybody else can be all right.

This unwelcome fact is the only common ground where all parties can stand together. It is the incontestable, irreducible truth about all of us, in all countries and in all classes. Would that some stentorian voice could stop the whole warring world in its tracks for two minutes of silence, in which each man could say firmly to himself: "Nobody can possibly be all right."

We can be grateful that disillusioned youth have rediscovered this ancient predicament of human life. They have been frowned upon for their suspicion of the natural goodness of man. They should rather be congratulated. Since the last war it has been dawning upon them like a revelation that we were not as good as we thought we were, and are not now all that we like to think we are, and never will be in this life as good as we ought to be.

Even picking flaws in our idealized ancestors (though a bit on the mean side, since the dead cannot defend themselves) is a healthy sign, provided the critics remember the old adage that we should beware of look-

ing for specks in another man's eye while we carry a telephone pole in our own. The best antidote for the cynic who scorns his fellow men is the plain admission that nobody can be all right—not excepting himself.

Likewise it must be affirmed that nobody is all wrong, though this is hard to prove with those we dislike. For much that is good in persons can only be discovered as we befriend them, and, being real friends with so few in this impersonal age of machines and remote relations, there is no way of telling how much is fine in most of us.

Can we be wrong and right at the same time?

Life would be so simple if some of us were either all false or all true. What bothers us is the fact that we are both right and wrong at the same time.

One of our humorists once drew a picture of a ski slope with the double tracks of a man's skis running straight down the hill toward a tree. Instead of both swerving to one side, one track goes one side of the tree, one the other, the two coming neatly together again and running to the bottom of the picture where the man is proceeding as nicely as you please. No caption explains how the feat was accomplished, and the imagination is left boggling with the problem of taking two alternatives at the same time. One cannot do that in skiing without some serious consequences; but in life the

clean-cut "either or" is a rare thing, while the baffling mixture "both and" is built into the very structure of life. We are not confronted by either an income or an income tax, but by both an income and an income tax; just as we are not faced with either a wife or a mother-in-law, but with both a wife and a mother-in-law, for better or worse.

The prophet Isaiah surveyed the chosen people and declared "none is righteous, no, not one," which does not deny that some of them surely had their good points. A Biblical parable, with a sly sense of humour, put the whole problem in the story of two boys on a farm who were told to work in the vineyard. One said, "I won't go," and that was wrong; then he changed his mind and went, and that was right. The other said he would go (in just a minute), and that was right; but then he never got around to it, and that was wrong. Nobody was all right.

Pascal once summed up the pros and cons with the conclusion that there are only two classes of people, sinners who think themselves righteous, and the righteous who think themselves sinners. The nearest thing to goodness in this world is a repentant sinner who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," a searcher for truth who is convinced of his ignorance and "cannot bear not to know what there is to be known."

Ours is a serious predicament—imperfect people all

tangled in the consequences of unlimited relations in an inexhaustible universe, dealing with titanic forces of cosmic machinery and responsible to universal laws, so few of which we know. This state of things is not our choice, nor entirely our fault, but our permanent condition. It is like being born in Texas or California—we never get over it.

2. THE CONVERTIBILITY OF HUMAN NATURE

The Biblical view of our human nature is that it is neither all good nor all bad, but convertible. We may not be perfectible here on earth but we are always convertible. There lies our only hope.

Why do we feel selfish even when we try to be unselfish?

A student once said, in some bewilderment, that he tried hard to escape from selfishness, but he never succeeded even when he thought he was unselfish. This is a very old and common experience. Huxley once said that if anyone could wind him up like a clock, so that he would always go right, he would close with the bargain. But the bargain was never completed. All of

us are wrestling with faults that have been so long with us that we cannot remember ourselves without them.

Certainly people who talk too readily about being saved from their sins, impress us as still in need of more saving—especially from the self-righteousness of their saved lives.

The prayer for the deliverance from evil, like the prayer for bread, is supposed to be a daily request—deliver us from evil daily.

Is conversion a sudden and final experience?

Becoming a different sort of person may be a sudden experience, especially if we have been discontented with a wrong or empty life for a long time. Paul had long been kicking against some inner discontent before the light suddenly dawned upon him on the road to Damascus. Whether the conversion is sudden or otherwise we always need more conversion, because there is no end to being a different person from what we are.

We need to bring back into our vocabulary this old word "conversion" with its modern meaning. To us the word "convert," in practical matters, implies continuity. Food is converted into bodily tissue, and physical life is converted into personality, continuously.

Certainly in the field of knowledge we never are finally delivered from ignorance. This is not discouraging, it is exciting. The more we know, the more ig-

norance we recognize from which we wish to be delivered. Constantly our cocksureness needs to be shocked, humbled, and converted into a teachable frame of mind. So over against the continuity of the evil of putting ourselves first, our religion sets the continuity of humility, forgiveness, and deliverance from sin.

However we explain our incompetence, we are always held accountable. This accountability is what intensifies our human tragedy. Our New England ancestors, on the occasion of a serious epidemic of disease, are reputed to have crowded into their church to pray for protection, thus spreading the epidemic from which they sought deliverance. Our fathers learned that they were responsible to the laws of hygiene whether they knew them or not.

Can reason cure perversity?

Some have argued that evil ways are due to ignorance and, if we used a little more reason, our troubles would be over. Anybody would do what he knew to be right and for his best interest. This argument is as old as the Greeks and is still good, but not good enough. For we never can know all the consequences since we are not omniscient, and we therefore are bound to make mistakes when we draw conclusions before all the facts are in.

The convertibility of human nature is an inexhaustible possibility. It is not enough to *make* human nature

because it must be *re-made* over and over. The Bible is full of words with the prefix *re-*, meaning again and again: regenerate, rebirth, revive, renew, refine. These words are all summed up in the final word resurrection which means, not an escape of the soul from the flesh, but the climax of a continuous transformation of the material into the spiritual, and of the temporal order of community into the eternal community of the spirit. Our Creator is best described as one who is forever making all things new.

Are the possibilities of evil always tied to the possibilities of good?

Thus far we have had to live in the midst of evil. The best life we have known has been made in that environment. The prospects are that good and evil possibilities will always go along together in this world. We should not blink the fact, illustrated by atomic power, that the chances of even greater evil accompany the new opportunities for greater good. Mere improvements are not identical with progress.

Salvation is not simply a matter of trying a little harder. Recently a young man said that after much discussion about religion he came back to one basic difficulty: the gap between what he knew he ought to be and what he was. The more he tried to close the gap, the wider it seemed to be. Christianity begins after we have confronted that fact.

3. THE PERVERSITY OF HUMAN NATURE

Perhaps the most unique insight of the Bible has to do with the perversity of human nature which complicates the deliverance from evil. We have a way of contradicting our own nature, "biting off our own nose," and going against our best interest.

For us and our Creator there is no alternative but to make the best of imperfect parents in our homes, imperfect teachers in our schools, imperfect people in business and government. If the truth were known, every college is a place where young sinners are trained by older and wiser ones, with nothing but sinners on the Board of Trustees, and a whole retinue of sinners in the alumni body.

What constitutes our perversity?

We are all like the man who said he never made a fool of himself twice in the same way, but always found a new way to make a fool of himself. We begin life as self-centered infants, and so long as we have to look after ourselves the bias of self-interest will always affect our judgments. And besides, we are always involved in a society which will not let us do exactly as we intend. Often we must choose between voting for one of two rascals or not voting at all.

Furthermore, we do not *want* to know all we should, and we do the wrong thing when we actually know better. Augustine once prayed: "Make me pure—but not now." Why did he delay, after he understood what was right? We are all like Augustine. We want to look out for others, but not right now when we have ourselves to look after. We want our spiritual nature to be satisfied, but not at this moment when some very natural desires clamour for attention. So our spirit turns back from the calling of the Most High and persuades itself to become a servant of our passing impulse.

In his *Autobiography* Franklin set down a whimsical incident from his first voyage to Europe. Being a vegetarian at the time, he had scruples about eating some delicious fish, caught while the ship was becalmed. But when the fish were cleaned, he noted that they had smaller fish in their stomachs, and concluded, "If you eat one another, I don't see why we mayn't eat you." He then added this profound observation on the secret of man's perversity, largely overlooked by the Greek philosophers: "*So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do.*"

The story of Adam and Eve describes the original sin when the first man did the forbidden thing because his wife tempted him; and she tempted him because a snake told her that forbidden fruit was not so bad after all. This is not a scientific nor even historical

story, for no snake ever used vocal chords. But a snake in the grass is a good symbol of the sneaking, deceitful way our desires persuade our reason to grant their requests. This story of how the first man fell for the wrong thing is not something that happened once long, long ago, but something that is always true of mankind everywhere.

When our fathers considered it as actual history they became involved in strange arguments. They taught that the original corruption of our race by the first man continued to infect all descendants, until our whole nature became incapable of good.

What do modern thinkers say about original sin?

The psychologists remind us that in some subterranean depths of our nature there are original hunger drives, impulses, and emotions, which are our impelling forces. These have no conscience of their own, no character. They conflict with each other and have no self-control. Each is out for itself, creating inner tensions that cause us to break down and go to pieces. And our reason is supposed to manage these unruly forces like an overseer managing his slaves. But the slaves bribe the manager to do their will. We call this rationalization. Self-deceit is a plainer name. And original sin is the old-fashioned terminology for the same thing.

Karl Marx also pointed out that our interest in making a living may constantly bias our point of view. We

are unconsciously determined by our interests to modify our ideals and opinions. Every man's idea of the income tax is influenced by the size of his income. Middle class people in the churches have ideas of social change that are affected more by their investments than by their Christian ideals. Marx failed to see that the proletariat would be biased by interest in like manner. Certainly in affairs of state, self-interest has more weight than our highest moral sentiments in the shaping of our policies.

So the Bible, psychology, and sociology all agree that we never outgrow this habit of betraying the best we know.

Is self-centeredness sinful?

We were born self-centered, under necessity of looking after ourselves. To dodge this responsibility is to leave it to others, which is death to initiative. But we were also born to be in relation to others, and we keep blocking ourselves when we try to look after ourselves separately. We appear to be unselfish up to a point, where it is safe, and appreciated, and where relations are friendly and reciprocal. We do at times forget to look after ourselves—almost. But whenever some vital interest is threatened, we at once make ourselves the center and judge the whole of life by what we see through the peep-hole of our interest.

Thus a break comes in our relations with others who

expect the world to revolve around their interest as the center. We all become like galaxies of self-centered groups, talking of separate rights and independent sovereignty.

The final result of self-centeredness is the old, familiar contradiction. We find ourselves doing what we know we should not do. A self-centered man wants to make friends, but no one likes a friend who is all wrapped up in himself.

The self-centeredness of groups ends in the same impasse. We want peace and we get war. We want preparedness against war, and we start others preparing against us. We want unity and we become divided. We want security, and create more insecurity. Without knowing it we become caught in the sins of the whole world.

4. THE ONLY JUSTIFIABLE CHARACTER

We are now ready to see what type of person is best fitted to live in the midst of this lasting predicament. There are at least four types familiar to us today.

What does the perfectionist stand for?

The perfectionist is the conscientious person who seeks to avoid implication in any evil. Twenty years ago such an individual asked me why I did not clear

my conscience by declaring that I would never in any way lend my support to war. I agreed to do so provided he would immediately clear his conscience by withholding his taxes which created the war machine. It is proper for anyone by non-cooperation to make conscientious objection to war, provided he does not claim to be *all* right. Every non-cooperator is obliged to depend on others to defend the country which gives him freedom to be passive. Otherwise he would permit tyranny of a hideous sort to engulf us all. If he says he is willing to be engulfed, he is still not all right for he knows that others will save him from actually facing the consequences.

If one would avoid evil entirely he could join no party, belong to no church, support no nation, unite with no human movement of good, because organized effort on earth has to be sustained by people who are quite a little lower than the angels. Perfectionism inevitably tends to paralyze action in the name of purity. Meanwhile the operation of the world's affairs must be left in the hands of the imperfect who are always with us and glad to take over—especially in politics and business.

What is the sentimental way of dealing with our problems?

We are all in the sentimental class most of the time. We are like the little girl who said she never prayed

to God to help her to be good—she could be good if she really wanted to be. We feel sure that if we all wanted a Christlike spirit hard enough our difficulties would disappear. Obviously if every one had the right attitude everything would be easier all around, but until that happens what are we going to do?

Here again we leave a moral vacuum into which rush the clever men who are impatient with talk and who promise to get something done. Our perfect ideal is so remote that we try to cover up our hopelessness. We tend to think that what is hard to change now is about as good as anyone could expect. Merely holding ideals makes us feel that we are somehow faithful to them. Of course we are not perfect, but certainly we are as decent as our class expects us to be. We may compromise now and then, but, after all, we do nothing questionable unless so many others are doing likewise that we are not conspicuous. We exploit no one save in the ordinary course of business under the law. We are glad to let others have access to privileges provided ours are safe first. We will play fair, provided it does not interfere with success on which our life depends.

This sentimental idealism has been the road along which our disasters have come. The late Archbishop of Canterbury remarked that "this vast accumulation of evil is due to the fact that millions of people are as good as we are and no better."

What is a nihilist?

Revolting against the perfectionist and the sentimentalist, there appears among us the fanatic type who abandons all morals to be efficient.

We all like a little nihilism when it suits our purpose. The adolescent, revolting from the customs of some stodgy or stagnant respectability and going forth to sow wild oats, is a budding nihilist on the loose. Without some such break from static goodness we would still be caught in the sins of our ancestors and final dullness. In post-war periods we learn what a general looseness can mean. Scrapping the Ten Commandments becomes the vogue. It is smart to be as nonchalant as the soldier, who, after listening to a chaplain's talk on the Commandments, pulled himself together, saying: "Anyway, I never made a graven image."

The modern revolutionists have drawn for us the full conclusions of nihilism. Seeing all the chicanery of self-interest concealed behind a respectable and even Christian front, they came into the open to do the worst things without embarrassment. Seventy-five years ago in Russia Dostoevsky saw this moral chaos coming, and depicted in his novels imaginary characters who today are in the flesh. His man from the "underworld" says: "I shall not be a bit surprised, if in the midst of universal reason, there will appear all of a sudden some

common man, a rather cynical and sneering gentleman, who, with arms akimbo, will say: 'Now then, you fellows, what about smashing all this reason to bits—and living as we like according to our own silly will?' " People on the edge of desperation tend to talk that way.

It was Nietzsche, with his philosophic mind and rapiers wit, who elaborated the theory of nihilism. A young man of fastidious and aristocratic taste, he was nauseated by the mediocrity of Christian life that had lost its fear of God and degenerated into an easy-going morality with no bite in it. He hated religion when it had become complacent, amiable, ineffective, watered down to comfortable charity and good will toward the weak. He was equally disgusted with the irreligious ambition of the secular world trying for universal happiness by easing all difficulties and multiplying comforts.

When he turned his back on the false show, he sought to define what men must do in a world where "God is dead." He believed that God was dead, and dreaded the consequences when men realized there was no fixed and universal meaning to which they were responsible—nothing but an incoherent mixture that was cruel, contradictory, and senseless.

He proposed that man must put his own meaning into the senselessness. He called others to join him in creating a company of supermen who, with unlimited

power, could somehow hold all the contradictions together and achieve perfection. This perfection would include all the extremes of cruelty and kindness, falsehood and honor, force and gentleness. With God gone, he wished to create men who would be as gods in their own right. This theoretical solution of deifying man, when actually worked out in practice by human beings, came before us in the horrors of Nazism, which doubtless would have shocked Nietzsche as it did us. To Nietzsche all the laws by which life evolved seemed to contradict the values by which we live. He insisted this was "the secret trouble" that gave the tragic character to our modern world.

Into what type of character could men be converted to fit our needs?

Over against these three types, there is one other which is the true product of our Biblical faith at its best. We will name it the *justifiable type*, because it is justified by its admission that no one can possibly be all right, and by its readiness to offer the best it has.

Our trust in this justifiable type began in our childhood before we could think for ourselves. My first impression of it can be traced back to my family who, in the summer, took me to live with the families of relatives in a country community, where the church had been founded by one of my ancestors under Jonathan Edwards. Out of that long family tradition I learned

whom to believe. The people of the village were not a company of saints. Even the hypocrites of the community helped my judgment. There was one "pillar of the church" who was brought up for discipline because he had thrown a butter plate into his wife's face. He thought he was good enough to be in the church, and defended himself by claiming that he only meant to throw the butter. The plate slipped from his fingers. Such a pious hypocrite, passing collection plates on Sunday and tossing butter plates on Monday, was an asset because he helped me recognize a real Christian when I saw one. A beloved aunt of mine appealed to me especially because she was at her best when dressing down an old skinflint like that.

This good woman never pretended to be good—that was the point. She never took a holier-than-thou attitude to interfere with my morals, and would have laughed at any praise of her own virtue. But whenever I was left in her hands, without any pretensions at all she gave her entire will and time to taking care of me. She identified herself with my childish needs, patiently enduring my obvious faults. Ingeniously she beguiled the hours with all sorts of amusements, ending with a treat of her special molasses cookies over an inch thick; so that my earliest impressions of Christianity were colored by her sulphurous denunciations of self-righteousness and made fragrant by the unforgettable smell of her pantry.

There, reduced to its simplest terms, was the type we trust. She did not think she was good; but out of her honest humility came that eagerness to give the best she had whenever the need arose. Her character was not like something self-made and self-righteous. Her goodness was more like a spirit that awakened in her, in the midst of her faults; and she responded to duty as though grateful for the chance to offer what she could, letting the results take care of themselves. She was anxious only to be faithful, and enjoyed a reward which no wealth could give. Her life did not consist in the things that she possessed. She was one of the common saints who, though poor, could make many rich.

And having a mother of the same type, in the apostolic succession of family life, I was given my lasting taste of a religious quality of character long before I had made up my mind about religious beliefs. The most intellectual people in the world have gathered the impressions they live by from such a homely source.

Can humility and meekness be justified in a world full of aggression?

This justifiable type is most effective amid the finiteness of human life where we pursue the unknown and unattainable with never a final solution. The best scientists, knowing they do not know and trying to make themselves willing servants of the truth, are of this sort. So are the best teachers, humble about their

achievements, ready to take human ignorance as their burden and sow the seed of harvests they never reap. From the same type come the chosen few in every community, most sensitive to wrong and most alive to what ought to be; the ever-willing people who make no pretensions but carry more than their share of the public load, suffering most from the public inertia and outwearying the evil opposition around them. These are the light of the world in their several generations. They connect us with an innumerable company of faithful people which the Bible calls the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." We trace their lineage through our family into the whole past. We owe everything good to these discoverers who, with unconditional faithfulness, have pioneered the open ways that were hid from "the wise and prudent."

This society of the conscientious, justified not by their perfection, but by their faithfulness, is what Christ called the "leaven" in the great lump of humanity. It is a society within society, and effective all out of proportion to its numbers; not ordered or compelled, open especially to those who have the clearest appreciation of their own shortcomings; leaving out none who wish to enter, save the proud, self-righteous, and intolerant, who exclude themselves; existing in all countries, races, and classes, yet confined to none; in all churches, yet represented truly by none; supporting all states, yet finally subject to

none; aggressively defending a free conscience freely shared. They are the carriers of the divine discontent, forever seeking, asking, and knocking at doors which others are loth to try. The future is theirs. Time, the tester of all things, is on their side. They are the "terrible meek" who inherit the earth.

5. REMAKING HUMAN NATURE

There is much to be said for the familiar assertion that we cannot trust human nature. Separated from redeeming influences it can be not only unreliable, but fiercer than the beasts. Innocence with regard to this terrible fact led us blindly into the disaster of war.

Should we have a wholesome suspicion of human nature?

We rightly suspect that selfishness is persistently concocting ideas that are not worthy of trust. A mother once said to her little girl, who had bitten her brother's nose, that it was the devil who made her mad. "No," said the child, "the devil may have made me mad, but biting my brother's nose was entirely my own idea." Human nature in the raw is seldom mild. All our idealism and pleasant beliefs about people must needs keep

this rather depressing fact in mind if we are to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" in dealing with human nature.

But this is only half of the truth. Offsetting this pessimistic view of the obstinate perversity of human nature, our Biblical faith offers another conviction that gives the ultimate ground for hope. Final trust is to be placed, not in man alone, but in the divine intervention as a power that corrects and redeems. Christianity courts no sunny delusions about man's perfectibility on this earth; and at the same time it is the only faith in the world that effectively combines hope and fear. All the foolishness of humanity is forever subject to a correcting and recreating power that is not of men, but of God. We can take our choice—either a superficial optimism about human nature which ends in pessimism, or an honest pessimism which, through God, ends in hope.

Can correction become redemption?

Correction alone, as we have seen, is negative, and by itself leaves us in despair with our predicament. But corrected failures, while they entail real losses, need not be total losses. In some unaccountable fashion, good is salvaged out of evil, to awaken fresh expectations and arouse response to untried ways.

The central doctrine of Christianity is the Incarnation. It is a way of saying that God's nature is such that

his spirit once took the form of a man who wholly identified himself with the neediest, not to condemn but to reclaim them for a higher purpose than their own desires. The drama of Christ's life is looked upon, not merely as a moral ideal too high to attain, but rather as an Act of God expressing the divine intention to stay involved in the imperfections of his creation, cost what it may. The idea is concisely packed into one Hebrew word "Immanuel," which means "God with us"—not God with any of us alone nor God without our common effort; but God taking part in all our interactions to reconcile our foolish ways to the fulfillment of life.

What is the reclaiming power like in actual experience?

We can best understand this reclaiming power if we connect it with some common experience which conveys it. It is always combined with correcting power.

Here is a student, for instance, who is drifting along in college on the assumption that he knows enough to get by. And he does get by a vast amount of knowledge that he needs, and escapes education despite the concerted effort to give it to him. Some day his ignorance overtakes him and he is effectively convinced that he knows next to nothing. A professor's profound knowledge helps to put him to shame, which is a perfectly healthy state of mind and the only justifiable state of

mind for a student in his youth. For directly out of that shame there comes an awakening, like a new hunger and thirst to know more. The awakening is not like an act of will of which one feels proud. It is like an inexplicable gift or inspiration to which a man responds, as though giving himself over to the spirit of truth itself.

Edison was corrected over three thousand times before he found the proper filament for an electric bulb. The corrections did not make him merely sorry for himself. They brought a continuous stimulus to explore further into the untried. He was reclaimed from imperfections, not to be perfect, but to become an utterly willing servant of any truth that could be known.

The effect of Christ's revelation is something like this in the field of personal relations. His life of selfless love has acted like a correction which has convicted man's respectability for the sham it really is. Like all normal correction, rightly understood, it has made men sorry for more than *themselves*.

Can our past be reclaimed?

A master preacher of our time has pointed out that after Judas sold his Master down the river for thirty shekels of silver, he saw he could not take back his deed, and went out and hanged himself. But the Apostle Paul did not die of remorse although he had killed plenty of Christians while he was a fanatical persecutor of the new sect. Like Judas he could not bring his vic-

tims back to life. When correction came to him, it did more than make him sorry for himself. It came like a light, an awakening to which he responded, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Instead of hanging himself, he yielded himself for use in an untried opportunity. He was still imperfect, but after yielding he was used as the greatest apostle of them all.

He is the great prototype of that justifiable kind of character which we have described. He who had been a martinet for living up to rules, trying to make himself good, could never make himself good enough—there was always much left to be forgiven. Once his self-made goodness had been reduced to shame, there came a quickening as of a new spirit, making him feel at once unworthy and yet eager to be worth more. As he responded with complete willingness he found that he, a persecutor, could be used as a most effective promoter. His mistaken past, which he could not recall, added weight to his persuasive power. He was so grateful for his recovery that he went forth on a mission which no amount of money could have hired a man to undertake. He summed it all up in the phrase: "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God."

Is everyone reclaimed in his own way?

No one can prescribe just how this reclaiming effect is produced in each of us. For at this far date there is

no way to disentangle the influence of Christ himself from the living community of people who carry down to us the power that he represented.

Sören Kierkegaard once described how his father exposed him as a child to this winning force. A collection of prints of great personalities in history was used to attract the boy's admiration to their various qualities of character. Among the pictures was one of a man on a cross. When the boy asked what that meant, he was told that crucifixion was a form of punishment for criminals. Was that man a criminal? No, he was a very good man. Why then was he made to suffer like that? Well, that is what the world does to people when they help others who do not want to be helped. The child's first reaction to that was indignation against such cruelty. But later, as he wondered why a man should want to suffer for others, the question struck home: "Why shouldn't anyone be that sort?" as though a merely respectable life were nothing in comparison.

Once a college student, in somewhat the same way, was attracted by a man who for thirty years had given his life to a boys' club of four thousand members in the slums of a great city. With means enough to live in the suburbs in comfort, he chose to identify himself completely with the tragedies and troubles of his boys as though they were his own. No doubt the college man wondered at first why anyone would willingly do that,

but then he faced the question, "Why shouldn't you?" Whatever had held that man in the slums began to lay hold on him also. Most of his life since he has given himself to restoring lost boys to opportunity. "The spirit bloweth where it listeth."

Lincoln Steffens once wrote: "I have always told my children that nothing is done finally and right; that nothing is known positively and completely; that the world is theirs, all of it. It is full of all sorts of things for them to find out and do, and do over again and do right. And they eat up the good news." In religion we call that good news the "gospel"—that transforming of failures into new chances that have not been explored.

Today we stand in the ruins of what we thought was about good enough. Business had failed, labor had failed, so had democracy and fascism and communism and education and so had we all. And as we admit that we got what was coming to us, blaming not only our enemies but ourselves for making our enemies what they were, and feeling ashamed of it all, we find everywhere an awakening that calls us to fresh adventures far beyond what we had thought respectable and good enough.

This, in private and public life, is the common material of experience to which the gospel of divine correction and redemption refers.

6. THE GRACE OF GOD

Someone complained recently that he was always bothered by the conventional phrase, "the grace of God." It smacked too much of commonplace and glib religion. We need to rescue the grace of God from cant and conventionality and give it fresh recognition in the common affairs of life.

Is our ability the measure of our possibility?

"Grace" stands for all that is "given" in the making and remaking of our life, *in addition to everything we can do*. In multitudes of people grace is operative even where it is not consciously connected with Christ or with God. The influence that corrects and changes has reached us through a civilization that has been saturated with our religion for centuries. The original source is not always clear, because we are secretly influenced by our memories of and contacts with all sorts and conditions of people. Through endless meetings with a host of people, living and dead, there operates the "power not ourselves" which arouses all good against all evil from age to age.

We still need the best theologians and thinkers to help us clarify our minds concerning the heritage of Christian thought, for the tendency of modern man is

to simplify the understanding of life by not thinking deeply about anything. But reasoning, however clear, does not produce the change of heart which makes us different persons. In any experience when our ego has been humbled and conquered, there is some connection with a person who stands like a living picture of what we ought to be and are ashamed not to be.

Does "grace" operate on us through people or directly from God?

The mixture of human and superhuman agencies is illustrated in Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. This simple and somewhat oversentimental tale tells of one man's deliverance from a shut-up life to a wide open one. Old Scrooge was a tight-fisted, grasping, covetous old sinner, "secret and self-contained and solitary as an oyster." He was all intake and no outgo. He was the very picture of an individual concentration camp—a man completely locked within himself, unable to free himself.

The mystery of his deliverance came from the "Spirits" who represent, in Dickens' own way, the super-human element—the "grace of God." And the Spirits did two things to Scrooge. They showed him the logical, inevitable consequence of his greed in the gradual *taking away of all meaning* from his life until he saw the final prospect of a neglected grave in a pauper's field.

At the same time the Spirits took him on a *tour of remembrance*. He was led back to childhood and brought along from the past to the present through familiar glimpses of friendly, outgoing, loving life in little bits which he had known. Those glimpses thawed him out, unlocked the doors of his imprisoned self, until once more he felt free and glad to let himself go.

From then on he practiced letting himself go until he became "as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city knew." He experienced the gospel of deliverance channeled through familiar human recollections, but Dickens asserts that such experience cannot be separated from its sacred source.

All our remembrances are intensified and fulfilled by the remembrance of that "sacred source," from which we cannot separate ourselves without growing self-satisfied and stale. Historically all great changes for the better in our civilization have coincided with a revival of interest in that universal personality who "belongs to the ages."

The experience of two thousand years confirms the conviction that the best way to think about God as a saving power, who is forever beyond our comprehension, is to take Christ's life as a kind of biography of God trying to live with the very kind of people we know so well—always including ourselves. He never

lost his patience with doubters, but circumvented their smart questions and left a moral problem on their doorstep. He was so intimate with the socially unfit, who were caught in the consequences of their sin, that he was called a "friend of sinners." Here was God at home with the working poor and snubbed by high society, who, for no reason, felt superior. He was not saccharine, and weak, and humble toward men. He was defiant, a troubler of the peace. He told off the bigwigs in the church as hypocrites, went roughshod over their Sabbath rules, ridiculed their religious formalities, and told them they obeyed all the easy rules and, behind a religious front, did the cruel business which selfishness loved to do. He outraged patriotic prejudice and dined with a Quisling like Zacchaeus who became a transformed man. He shocked the prudish by his friendship with outcast women of the streets. Religious leaders called him a blasphemer, tried to tell him how to be religious—fancy telling him how to be religious! In the week before his death he fought to a finish the corrupt nationalism dominating his people.

Here then, let us say, was God trying to get along with people like you and me. They resented having their goodness exposed to reality. They finally killed him, finished this God-man for good and all. So they thought. But God came out alive, and came back into the hearts of a growing company all over the world, through whom he has kept right on about his business.

The remaking force that entered the world in a personality with observable consequences through the ages is a fact in history that cannot be reduced to definitions nor put in logical forms. No knowledge of science, no tricks of psychology, no wisdom of professors, no cunning of the powerful can ever be a substitute for what God made known through one utterly willing man who tried to live on earth with people no worse or better than we are.

How does the practice of remembrance affect our transformation?

Douglas V. Steere, of the Society of Friends, has written a little book called *On Beginning from Within*, in which he describes in modern language the age-old religious practices for deepening our sense of the "cleavage and contrast" between our false life of self-love and the true life which is forever losing itself to find itself.

The outstanding thing in all practices of prayer is "recollection," or auto-suggestion. The grace of God which *starts* us loving, and forgiving, and moving toward what we ought to be, comes mainly from seeing the best things done. We need to take time to shut our mind off from the suggestions that accidentally tyrannize over it, and hold our attention on the living pictures of people who have power to move our wills. Obviously meditation on the life of Christ, in detail,

should hold highest place in this discipline, for he is the one person before whom even the great of the world feel their own unworthiness.

Such practiced recollection is entirely different from the "auto-suggestion" represented by Coué's famous way of talking to ourselves: "Day by day in every way, I am better and better." Such suggestion is preferable to saying: "Day by day, I am getting worse and worse." For we can talk ourselves down by bad suggestions; but we all know from sad experience it is not so easy to talk ourselves up.

I recall a period in life after the last war when I tasted the depths of a nervous disorder where one said to himself he could live the next ten minutes, and then try for the next ten. Never in that depression could I lift my spirits by saying to myself: "Day by day, I am better and better." What really started me out of self-imprisonment was the constant recollection of a wonderful old gentleman of seventy years who had been my predecessor in a city parish. He used to come and say: "Now remember, I went through this sort of depression thirty years ago. I felt, as you do, that I never would be any good again. But I came through. And though it left me with limitations, I have done the best work of my life since, within those limitations."

Whenever I slipped back into the dumps, I recalled that rugged, cheerful, old warhorse for righteousness who had become beloved by a whole city, and the

"grace of God" (something certainly *given* that was more than my own will) helped me to a fresh start toward a useful life.

We all have such living pictures through which we take our tours of remembrance, like Scrooge. And then we pass our pictures on to others through our living. I met a soldier returned from the war with a heart-leakage that he said would limit him for the rest of his days. I was moved to tell him how, within limitations, one was often surprised to find new kinds of satisfaction and usefulness. He felt it was a good philosophy and thanked me for talking, but I said he should thank the old gentleman who had pictured an undefeatable life to me. Thus we collect our living pictures, recollect them, and are moved by them to act as living pictures which others, unknown to us, may remember. And the grace of God secretly does its work in and through and upon us all.

Bit by bit we pick up the influence that corrects, and shames and makes us over. We keep reviving our memory of samples of out-going life, which is a joy in itself, even through suffering. Augustine called these familiar bits "vestiges of God." He had his favorite vestiges. We have ours. And it is well if we can take frequent and regular tours of remembrance to revive those we have so easily forgotten.

The strongest and most moving influence meets us where, in the secret of our souls, we commune with

someone whom we have wounded, whose love has continued to bear our ingratitude. For there, at first hand, we meet again in our world the love of God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

7. CHURCH AND STATE

There is no simple and fixed arrangement for managing our public affairs and doing full justice to each individual's personal life. Political action, after all, cannot reach the privacies of mind and soul where our most vital problems must be settled from day to day. We cannot be legislated into happiness nor made content in our families by acts of congress. It is this relation between our private and public life that raises in each age the question of church and state.

Is a human being more than the citizen of a state?

In our time governments have become more and more interested in people as citizens to be fitted into the plans of the state. Under the Nazi regime a good citizen could be the worst of human beings. Christ summed up the problem in an oft-quoted sentence: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Being a citizen of a state is not enough.

Mussolini, at the beginning of his career, claimed

that the common man found God too big and indefinite for his devotion. The state was nearer and more concrete. The state was just the right size. It was enough—nothing beyond or better than the state. The Nazis developed the myth of a worshipful state, endowed with absolute authority, having no moral responsibility to God or man, interested solely in expanding itself. People were simply parts of the political whole—personality was, theoretically at least, taboo.

The truth is that we are both individual and social—always alone inside and always in a community outside.

In a day when men are frustrated by forces they cannot control, they seek escape from personal meaninglessness by belonging to some community—a union, an industrial organization, a party, a class. Millions are finding this satisfaction through common effort relevant to their vital needs. Their secular organizations do what no church ever can or should do in gaining economic advantage and other social or cultural benefits. Religious motives may or may not play a part in such united efforts.

Over and above these secular groups, the state is required to furnish a power that no group can wield. But the state is always too big to attend to individuals. A vast organization submerges human beings in collective action for general ends. Its general care is not like the particular concern that nurtures the individual artist,

student, scientist, or creative person of any kind. The demand for order and efficiency may overlook individual cases of injustice, suppress free thought that disturbs the peace, and buttress any party that happens to be in power.

A state must guard our common welfare against rapacious groups, and protect us from disaster from outside its borders. But there is a limit to this protection. For the more we leave our welfare to the state, the more we become its pensioners. We are treated well if the authorities approve our record in the card index. "We are more secure and orderly, but less free."

What can the church do to offset the power of the state?

The church stands within the state for the unconditional purpose of God to bring every personality to its fullest stature and meaning. The task of the church is to train people, while they are citizens in politics and business, to keep their relation to God who creates the life of the spirit out of their earthly contacts and material struggles. For what "makes the man" is more essential than any worldly policy. The fear of the Creator, in this regard, is the beginning of wisdom. Apart from that fear, every political or business system tends to make the citizens the victims of organization and security.

Practical success in any line of endeavor is possible

only when certain conditions are fulfilled. It is therefore not easy to remember that the life of the spirit which "makes the man," is unconditionally good—good even in the midst of failure.

Walt Whitman somewhere tells of a young woman in the Civil War, who became a nurse because she liked to have attractive men fall in love with her. But when wounded men were brought into the hospital too bloody and mangled to be attractive, the conditions for her nursing were non-existent and she resigned from the service. A good nurse behind the lines must be unconditionally concerned with the wounded. Such unqualified devotion may not bring her a husband on the spot, but it makes her a real nurse—with the chance of a husband still open.

What is the use of common worship?

The art of worship which is the specialty of the church is different from all the other arts, while making use of them all. Preaching is only one of many elements in this art. Opinion differs so widely with regard to "sacraments" and the various "means of grace" that we must omit discussion of them in a book which is concerned with our broadest agreements. It would surprise most people to know that all forms of worship, of ancient standing, have a somewhat common aim and pattern. They are sound psychological ways of leading our minds through essential steps to renew our relation

to God's creative activity. They might be roughly stated as follows:

(a) First we must be detached from every day distractions, and absorption with self. Our attention must be transferred from man the creature to God the Creator—the eternal mystery behind all mysteries.

(b) Freed from distraction, we are made sensitive to those "quickenings" of new life and thought which we experience in solitude.

(c) In turn these "quickenings" sharpen our awareness of all the secret and open faults which have been interfering with any new life.

(d) Remembrance of all that has been given in nature and human nature is aroused to create the sense of indebtedness from which true action comes with spontaneity.

(e) By liberation from the pressures of life, we are brought into the cool and collected mood in which decisions and commitments can best be made.

(f) Power to move us toward decision is drawn from the whole body of great and good lives, past and present, to whom we owe the best we know.

(g) Our lonely striving is strengthened and sustained through meeting with the company of our fellows who share our heritage and our perplexities.

(h) Our ruling desires are brought as requests before God, that we might see whether we wish our lives to be dominated by them. And our minds are turned

outward toward others in compassion so that nothing within us may check that "willingness to be worked through" which puts our lives freely in the hands of the Creator.

Like any other art in life, this greatest of arts can be abused, mishandled, and reduced to a meaningless form. But it is a sound and essential practice.

What is the simplest reason for trying to separate church and state?

In business and politics we have to be involved in immediate, practical questions of what is possible at any given time. The church must somehow maintain the long-term view against the short-term view of life.

We all need to recover repeatedly a perspective of wider range than immediate considerations. We need early nurture for each generation in the unchanging values of the spirit that give life its meaning in any social order. We must have institutions which convey across the years, and across all boundaries, the tested experience of centuries with which to judge the present, detect its false or temporary values, recognize the bias of every group in favor of its own interest, and discover the blind spots of any particular generation. While the universities are free to seek *new* truth, the church must be free to guard the truth that is *known*, through the one matchless life that holds forever the meaning of human history.

EPILOGUE

There is added to the Lord's Prayer a brief doxology: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." It is a summary statement that in all our changing, temporal life, there is something that *is* forever. The glory of creation which keeps alive our sense of wonder, the disturbing force of compunction, the continuous power that corrects and redeems—all these are of God and remain the same yesterday, today and forever. Our inescapable imperfections stand under and within the judgment and the mercy of our Creator. Therefore, with all our incompetence we can live in solemn fear and in undying hope, saying with James Joyce: "Welcome, O Life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."

There have always been two ultimate groupings of humanity. There are the people who are fascinated by the future, and there are the people who are attached to the past. One group lives on the assumption of change; the other on the assumption of the *status quo*. Society seems able to reproduce a sufficient number of both types to maintain an unceasing conflict between

the two. But those who are dominated by the power of the future have the advantage in the testing of time, because they have behind them the two greatest forces at God's command; the unrest of the masses and the idealism of youth.

Today ours is a world imperiled by conservatism. We are hearing much of the perils of radicalism. But these perils grow because conservatism dams the stream too long.

Let us be clear about this conservatism. It is not that of the earnest, practical man who is willing to see change, but who insists that ideals shall keep at least in sight of facts. No, it is conservatism best described in a picture. In the story of our Lord's passion week it says that while Jesus was in the judgment hall, Peter was sitting outside by the fire "*warming himself.*" While the great issue of right and wrong hung in the balance, he was simply looking after Peter. He was not opposed to Jesus, nor was he for him heart and soul. He was keeping at a safe distance taking care of himself.

That is the kind of conservatism which is blocking the progress of the world. It is found among those who are sufficiently comfortable to be content with their lot. It exists in people who favour no change until they must. Such conservatives are not opposed to improvement, nor will they promote it. Their inertia invites some disturbing force to move them. Huxley once said

that there was just one class of people whom he could not endure—the people who were “neither for God nor for the devil, but for themselves.” Horace Bushnell had this same group in mind when he said that the progress of righteousness was delayed, not by being opposed, but by being “sat upon.” Benjamin Kidd refers to the same source of trouble when he reminds us that all the reforms which have been the blessing of England in the last century were originally opposed by the cultured and comfortable people.

Men bid us beware of the radicals. That negative program is always easy to advocate. And far be it from any of us to approve of all that the radical represents. But in a world where evolution and change are the law of life, the radical who wants movement is not the only one to be feared. An equally dangerous group in a moving world is the group which wants to stand still. This group creates the desperation which it deplors. The violence of the radical is the outcome, in part, of the inertia of the conservative who would marshal the power of law itself against the inevitable process of change. And when law defends inertia, it opens the way for lawlessness. Our young people go out into a world where the crisis of the nations might be summed up in this question: Can we move the conservative far enough before the radical moves too far?

Our chief danger is that the native energy of our idealism will be weakened by a daily fraternizing with

the very foe we wish to oppose. Everywhere in life, in politics, industry, religion, we will find people who will not move until they are pushed. They are among our friends. They are people of personal rectitude, often charitable to a fault, and deeply religious in their private life. Their respectable condition in life will be our own subtle temptation.

The person who has attained a comfortable home and equally comfortable income is not in a hurry to think that there is anything wrong with the world. His condition tends to slow down his thoughts about change. But those with no home worthy of the name and with an income which keeps them on the precarious edge of poverty—they are in the mood for change. Their condition tends unduly to hurry up their thinking, or at least their activity. This is why humanity is always “renewed from the bottom.” Not because the wisest people are there—they are generally found further up toward the top—but because a discontented mind can be made to think of change sooner than a contented one. If God finds contented minds too slow for his purpose, then he will have to use what minds he can get. He often must use the most unwise in making a disturbance which will set stagnant minds to thinking again.

It is too easy to settle down and take care of ourselves, and not worry until we must. Society will not complain if we do. We can perform the duties which

custom prescribes. We can pay out our pleasant charities. We can develop, possibly, a charming personality and behave ourselves most seemly withal, and, before we know it, be stagnant, inert members of society, helping to create the desperation which grows around us.

Into this situation an educated man should bring the contribution of a disciplined mind. The difference between a disciplined and an undisciplined mind is this: One is naturally inclined to seek truth, and the other to hold opinion. Colleges have endeavoured to train youth not to hold an opinion as a man who clings to a "chip off the block of absolute truth," but to hold it as a man who is seeking for more truth, which might at any time modify the little he already has.

Alas! How many intelligent people have ceased to be seekers for truth! They have become mere holders of opinions. They borrow a one-sided view from a biased paper. They absorb the prejudiced talk of their set. They learn about the thoughts of the masses through the embittered judgment of critics. They see everything from the angle of their class or profession. They read the books with which they agree. They live on the untested ideas of others.

Certainly our war dead would thus charge every educated man: "You have a mind disciplined to live up to the facts, make it your business to condemn no man on the evidence of his enemies. Go back to the man himself. Read his thoughts, earnestly desiring to get

his point of view. Try to look at things as they would appear if you stood in his place. If people differ from you, discover why they differ. No man is wrong through sheer perversity. He is wrong because he thinks he is right. Learn to find the partial truth which men hold mingled with their fallacies, that you may fulfill and not destroy. Thus you may become more than a critic. You may become an interpreter of the life of your time. To embrace in your sympathy the thoughts of all sorts and conditions of men—this should be your ambition and your service. Seek to have in you something of the power which Emerson described in his famous picture of our martyred president: 'Lincoln is the true history of the American people of his time; the true representative of this continent, an entirely public man, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thoughts of their minds articulate on his tongue.'

"Your one chance at life has been bought with blood and tears. Millions of lives have been laid down for the world in which you will work and live. Across all your plans there should appear the shadow of humanity's great cross. You will be strengthened against the periods of selfishness as you experience the old but ever-deepening truth that you have been died for. In the strength of this motive, it is your responsibility to carry on in the unending struggle between those who are fascinated by the future and those who are caught by the power of the past."

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